

If we don't leave this town, we might never make it out

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If we don't leave this town, we might never make it out

by [grasstastic](#)

Summary

Before he knew it, he was on the road.

He sat back in the old seat of the van, a wave of gratification nearly taking the breath from his lungs. He let out a laugh- somewhere between relieved and terrified.

“I did it,” He breathed. “I actually fucking did it.”

There was a rustling behind him, he barely even registered before-

“Whut d’ya do?”

Wilbur screamed.

Or

Wilbur is driven (pun intended) to take a road trip, and finds a stowaway in his van that's going to make everything just so much harder.

Notes

Update: Following the news of Technoblade's passing

If you did not read the tags beforehand, I'll just say it: this story features a major character that dies of cancer. No, it's not Technoblade, but it's still too close for comfort. This fic was written before his diagnosis was even announced, so please don't attack me. I'm working on changing the illness to something else, but that will take time. That being said, I'm not deleting this work. I love Techno, and all of this feels like a cruel irony.

Please be careful when reading this work, and take of yourselves :)

-

AHHHHHH I'M BACK MOTHERFUCKERS

I know I'm supposed to be working on my main fantasy au rn (30k words into that btw) and there's the alternate timeline au I still have to come back to for the other fic and I AM DOING THOSE I SWEAR- I just thought of this wonderful little idea in the span of like, two minutes the other night and I've just got to write it.

I was listening to Sleep on the Floor by The Lumineers when I thought of this idea so that's where the long ass title is from.

ROADTRIP AU BABEYYYY (but also I want to emotionally devastate you LMAO)

Enjoy a bit of crack first though, because I simply CANNOT stay serious when writing.

insert general notice that this fic is about the characters not the CCs

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

What good is livin' a life you've been given If all you do is stand in one place?

The cigarette shook in his hand and it wasn't from the nicotine buzz.

Those are bad for you, Techno used to say. *They'll kill you.*

And maybe they would. If he was lucky.

He tapped the end of the cig, letting a clump of glowing ash fall to the gravel by his shoes. When he let a breath out the orange winter skyline was clouded by smoke.

“Fuck...” He muttered under his sour breath, running a hand through his freshly washed hair, still damp from the shower.

He took a final long drag from the cancer stick before crushing it into the cold dirt beneath his heel.

Did he want to do this? Could he? *Should he?*

...What did he have left to lose? It was better than the alternative.

He rose from the front steps, turning and slipping into the house they belonged to. He would have to be quiet. The sun may have set but it wasn't late, not by any means, that was just how it worked late November in Kansas City.

Cash. Clothes. Deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, socks, meds-

He froze, hearing movement from the kitchen.

After a moment it faded, moving to the living room, and he returned to the task at hand.

Guitar was already in the van. Another bag of clothes too, from the last time he nearly did this but never even made it off the porch.

He paused in the door, hand on the light switch.

The mini photo album by his bedside stared back.

He muttered a curse but shoved it into his backpack anyway, then turned and slipped down the hall and back out the door.

...Did his father have any idea? What he was minutes away from doing? Would he regret this night? Years later, when all was said and done, would Phil wished he had heard Wilbur's footsteps as he crept out of the house that night?

He shook the thoughts from his head, taping a piece of paper to the door. The icy gravel of the parking lot crunched under his shoes.

The van door creaked when he opened it, and he swung the backpack into the passenger seat as he sat down.

He was shaking as he pulled the keys from his pocket and slid them into the ignition.

This would be the last chance Phil had to stop him.

Once he pulled out of the parking lot he would be gone.

Who knows what would be left of him when he came back.

His eyes burned and he had a white-knuckle grip on the key, halfway through starting the van. He pressed his forehead to the steering wheel with a groan.

What was he *doing*?

It was hard enough for his father- Phil didn't deserve this.

He should-

No. He *couldn't*. He couldn't spend another day waiting for the inevitable. He couldn't spend another day in that fucking house.

He was leaving.

He turned the keys, and pulled the gear shift into reverse, backing out of the parking space.

Before he knew it, he was on the road.

He sat back in the old seat of the van, a wave of gratification nearly taking the breath from his lungs. He let out a laugh- somewhere between relieved and terrified.

“I did it,” He breathed. “I actually fucking did it.”

There was a rustling behind him, he barely even registered before-

“Whut d’ya do?”

Wilbur screamed.

He nearly swerved off the road as he whirled around to look behind him, but he managed to keep control and forcefully put his eyes forward.

“*What the fuck?!*” He yelled.

He stared into the darkness that was the back part of the van via the rear view mirror- he kept a mattress and blankets back there, not to mention his guitar, snacks, drinks and other knick knacks.

After a moment his eyes adjusted and he was able to make out a small figure.

“Why’re screamin’? I was sleeping, man.” The voice said.

Wilbur stared at the stranger. “Why the fuck were you sleeping in my van?”

There was a sniffle and it looked as though the person bristled in the darkness. “It’s my van now, bitch.”

“No its fucking not! You didn’t even have the keys to it! What were you going to do? Hotwire it?”

“Nah, I dunno how to hotbox- but it’s mine. No one was using it.”

“Hotwire not hotbox-”

“Same thing.”

“It’s *really* not- also it’s definitely *not* your van now so you’re going to get the fuck out before I call the cops.”

Wilbur seriously hoped this guy would take the threat seriously and scram because if he called the cops he had a feeling Phil would be notified somehow. He had friends in the department.

The person apparently didn’t take it seriously- or took it very seriously, Wilbur honestly couldn’t tell but regardless the next moment they were scrambling into the passenger seat beside Wilbur.

The driver’s eyes widened as he took in the criminal- who was clearly a *child* now that he could see him.

The boy was several years younger than Wilbur- maybe fifteen or sixteen. He had dirty blonde hair- as in literally had grime clinging to the light strands- and wild blue eyes. Despite the dark bags under his eyes, not to mention the fact that he had apparently just been sleeping, the kid looked like he had just chugged two cups of coffee from the way he buzzed in his seat, fingers tapping every surface, eyes never stilling.

“Woah- woah, buddy, pal, mate-” The kid said, pulling his leg over the armrest of the seat and nearly kicking Wilbur in the face.

“I’m not your ‘mate’.” Wilbur snapped at him, the nickname hitting a bit too close to home.

The boy laughed nervously. “Well I beg to differ, since we both own this van-”

“You don’t fucking own the van!” He spat at the blonde.

“Heh- WELL,” The kid hit the button of the glove compartment as he began speaking again, promptly distracting himself with the contents. “OH! You’ve got a reuben cube!” He exclaimed.

Wilbur gritted his teeth, hitting his signal lights as they approached a rest stop. "Rubik's." He corrected.

"Bless you." The other answered.

Wilbur pulled into a parking lot and parked the van, then leaned forward and began banging his head on the steering wheel.

"...you good there big man-? Hey- wait, why did we stop?"

Wilbur stared at the kid, getting a proper look at him now that he wasn't in the middle of driving down the highway.

He was right, the boy's hair was definitely blonde under that layer of dirt. His clothes were in a similar state to the rest of him- dirty, worn and fraying at the edges. His shoes were ratty and looked about to fall apart and as far as Wilbur could tell he didn't have a coat- which didn't bode well for the kid because it would be below freezing during winter nights here.

He blinked at the kid.

"You're getting out now."

There was a pause, and the boy not-so-subtly reached over and locked his door.

Wilbur's brow furrowed. "Get out!"

The blonde curled up in the seat at the shout. "...I don't want to."

Wilbur threw his hands up. "Go to a homeless shelter or something-! I don't care, just get out of my van!"

The kid scowled at that. "I am not homeless!"

"Then why are you living in my van?!"

"It's my van too!"

"It's not!"

The kid just scowled and grabbed the seatbelt, buckling himself in.

Wilbur glared at him. "You can't stay here!"

"Why not?!" The blonde challenged defiantly.

Wilbur sputtered, trying to think of a reason that didn't make him sound like a complete asshole for kicking the clearly homeless teen out of his van.

"I'll pay you!" The boy said suddenly.

Wilbur stared at him. "With what?"

“Money!” The blonde paused, reconsidering his own offer. “Not that- I mean- if you tried to mug me or something I would...steal your kidneys.”

Wilbur actually snorted at that. “You don’t want my kidneys.”

“Yeah but *you* do.” The blonde leaned forward, eyes glinting smugly.

Wilbur studied him for a moment longer.

“...I’m leaving. Driving around the country. You don’t want to come with me.”

“Sure I do!” The kid jumped on the line of conversation, sensing weakness in Wilbur’s resolve. “You- you’re like a music man right?” He nodded to the guitar case in the back.

“*Music man?*” The brunette repeated.

“It’ll be like going on tour! Lads on tour!”

Wilbur stared at him.

“Lads on tour?”

“Yeah!”

“What if I was a murderer?”

The bright smile on the blonde’s face fell slightly and he scooched away from Wilbur, making the older boy snort.

“...Are you going to murder me?” The kid asked lowly.

There was a pause.

Then Wilbur laughed.

It could’ve been the first real laugh he’d had in years.

...Was this really any crazier than what he was already doing? Wasn’t the point of this entire thing to actually *live* a little?

Maybe Wilbur could manage to do one good thing.

“Yeah, maybe if you get too annoying.” Wilbur promised, putting the van into gear again.

The other boy’s eyes widened, but he didn’t look scared- just...excited. He watched Wilbur pull out of the parking lot practically bouncing in his seat.

“I- I can stay?” He breathed.

Wilbur sighed. “You...can take a shower- cause you’re making this whole van smell, really, especially with the circulating air-”

“Fuck off.” The kid mumbled, though there was no real bite behind the words.

“And I’ll *think* about it-”

The boy whooped, sitting forward in his seat.

“Lads on tour!”

“Lads on tour.” Wilbur agreed, then sighed, cursing internally. So much for thinking about it.

“What’s your name anyways, random-kid-who-snuck-into-my-van?”

The blonde grinned at him, all blued eyed, street lamp lit, and dirt streaked.

“Tommy.”

The brunette nodded to him. “Alright, Tommy. I’m Wilbur.”

Tommy *did* have some money, and gave Wilbur two hundred dollars in cash...\$50 of which was immediately spent at a Walmart on fresh clothes and basic amenities for him despite his protests because ‘if Wilbur was letting him sleep in his van he wasn’t going to be able to tell he was there by the smell’...or something.

Frankly, he was entirely shocked that the man had actually *let* Tommy stay in the van- seriously, who finds a homeless kid in their car and thinks ‘this will make for a fun story’?

Wilbur apparently.

Not that Tommy was complaining.

They did actually get Tommy a shower- which was amazing by the way. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d had one. Actually no- it was definitely when he broke into a planet fitness last August.

Tommy was half convinced it was a ploy on Wilbur’s part to ditch him but the older boy stayed in the locker room and talked the entire time so Tommy could hear him.

When he finished and came out in a fresh hoodie and sweatpants Wilbur actually laughed.

“You’re all baby faced under all that dirt!” He exclaimed.

Tommy kicked him in the shins as he stood up. “Fuck you! I am not! I’m a big man! Bigger than you anyways.”

Wilbur wrinkled his nose. “Okay, child. It’s like nine now- isn’t that past your bedtime? We should be leaving.”

Tommy swatted him but missed. “Fuck off...I get the mattress.”

“No you don’t! It’s my mattress!”

“I’ve been sleeping on it for the last week.”

The brunette made a face. “Remind me to wash that thing when I get a chance.”

Tommy stuck his tongue out at him as they left the YMCA building. “Just flip it over dumbass.”

He did end up flipping it over, *and* washing all the bedding at a laundromat. He even threw Tommy’s old clothes in a separate machine.

Tommy sat on one of the washing machines with a juice box, swinging his legs. Wilbur tossed the last of the dirty laundry he had stowed away in the van into the second machine and closed it up, starting the cycle then turning to lean against the washer with a sigh.

Tommy watched him, straw making loud slurping noises.

The brunette opened one eye and peered at him. “...I think you drank it all.”

Tommy just shrugged.

Wilbur held out a hand but the boy just leaned away from him. He made a grab for the empty box and Tommy shrieked and fell back off the machine.

The brunette’s head appeared above him over the top of the row of washing machines.

“You alright...?”

Tommy glared up at him. “No. I’m concussed.”

The man only rolled his eyes. “That’s your own fault.”

“How is it-?!?”

Wilbur cut him off with a laugh.

Tommy grumbled and hauled himself back onto the top of the machines. “You are a bitch, Wilbur.”

“Okay, child.”

“Dickhead!”

“Gremlin.”

Tommy chucked his empty juice box at him and it bounced off his forehead.

Wilbur glared at him. "I'm *this* close to kicking you out."

"Of the laundromats?"

"Of the *van*."

"Oh." Tommy said, then screwed up his face. "You can't do that, I paid you. I'll steal your kidneys, remember? And your spine for good measure."

Wilbur sighed. "So you will." He glanced over to Tommy again.

"So Gremlin, what's your story? Why were you in my van?"

Tommy shrugged. "Cool van, innit?"

Wilbur snorted. "Where's mummy and daddy Gremlin?"

Tommy scowled. "Dunno, don't really care."

"Foster system?"

"Yup." He answered, popping the 'p'. "They're bitches though so I got outta there."

He shot Wilbur a warning look.

The brunette put his hands up. "I'm not a snitch."

Tommy studied him for a moment, then nodded, satisfied.

Wilbur chuckled.

"What about you, big man?" He elbowed the older boy. "Why are you driving places n' shit?"

The older boy shifted his feet. "Eh...was cooped up too long. Needed to get out. See the world."

"And you could do that? Just up and leave?"

Wilbur shrugged. "Don't have a job or anything anyways. No reason not to. Every reason to."

"No family?"

He paused, eyes sliding to the floor as he considered Tommy's question. "I...my Dad but..." He blinked and shook his head. "It doesn't matter. He'll be fine."

"So?! Where are we goin'?" Tommy hopped into the back of the van as Wilbur pulled the sheets and blankets, now freshly washed, back onto the mattress.

The brunette raised an eyebrow. "I dunno. Nowhere tonight."

Tommy scowled, snatching a blanket from the pile and curling up in the corner. “You’re boring.”

“Yeah well not everyone slept all day today so...” He trailed off with a smirk.

The blonde didn’t like the comment.

“What else was I supposed to do? Waste of energy, moving. Its fucking cold out man.”

Wilbur paused briefly but said nothing.

They finally settled down for the night, Tommy on one end of the van, Wilbur on another. Wil wasn’t quite sure what Tommy meant by ‘moving was a waste of energy’ because now that he was immobile he was *freezing*.

He pulled the blankets around him closer, listening to Tommy’s steady breathing. He didn’t understand how the kid managed to pass out with even less blankets and body mass than him but he had.

Something kicked his shin sharply.

Nevermind, he hadn’t, apparently.

“*Ow-*” Wilbur hissed. “The fuck was that for?”

“You’re making the whole damn van shake with your shivering. Its fucking annoying.”

The brunette grumbled and let his head fall back against his pillow. “Oh, *my bad*, let me just-”

He was cut off as Tommy abruptly began moving, muttering curses under his breath.

“W- the fuck are you doing?” Wilbur asked him.

The blonde huffed as he threw down his own pillow and flopped down beside Wilbur, huddling close and tossing his own blanket over the both of them.

“You’re fucking weak, Wilbur. You would die out in nature. Wouldn’t make it three days. Natural selection and all that-”

“I get it.” Wilbur replied, gritting his teeth, though that just made them chatter more.

Tommy snorted, but finally quieted down and stopped moving, pressed against Wilbur’s side like an oversized hot pocket.

The brunette sighed as warmth finally crept up his limbs again.

“...Thanks...”

Tommy merely grunted in response.

Wil gave a small huff of laughter, fatigue pulling at him now that he had begun to warm up. After a few moments sleep began to drag him under and he only briefly wondered if he should worry about the kid shanking him in his sleep, before deciding if that was the case it was too late to reconsider anyways, and slipping into slumber.

I've moved further than I thought I could

Chapter Summary

But I missed you more than I thought I would.

It's just Crimeboys fluff. It's so fucking soft you fall through it.

I don't think there are triggers, but lmk. Same goes for chapter one.

Chapter Notes

No I will not be accepting bribes to change the tags. Suffer. LMAO SORRY I LOVE YOU ALL BUT IF I HAD TO KNOW THE ORIGINAL ENDING OF THIS AU SO DO YOU, WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.

I'm not an asshole though there will be warnings at the start of chapters, you'll know before you read if the angst is kicking in and can choose to ignore the last few chapters if you want, HOWEVER-

As of today I planned a sequel so do with that information what you will.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He was awake with the sun, slipping from his bed and into the kitchen to pour a cup of coffee as light began to break over the eastern skyline.

The kitchen was pretty bare. Most of his small apartment was. He might have dropped out of college but he still looked the part. The only thing on his kitchen counter was a plant he always forgot to water and a picture frame.

The photo inside of it was old, but the people in it looked young. No wrinkles, no dark bags, no sad eyes. No one had gotten sick and died yet. The worst thing they'd gone through was taking Techno in, and he had the impression that was a whole lot easier than losing a wife. Or a mother.

He wondered if losing a brother was any easier.

Almost as if the universe heard his thoughts, his phone began to ring from the counter beside him. He stared at the caller ID dread pooling.

No. Not yet.

They told him he had months-

He hadn't even gone to see him yet. Just been hiding from it all in the bay area, where his apartment was.

Techno picked up the phone.

“...Hello?”

“He disappeared.” Phil’s voice was scratchy and raw.

Techno froze. “W-What?”

“Wilbur. He’s gone. Took the van and left last night. There’s a note on the front door. I- I don’t- I don’t know what to do, I don’t where he’s gone-”

“Calm down, Phil. Tell me what you do know.”

There was a deep breath from the other end of the line. “The note said ‘Sorry, but I can’t sit and wait for it any longer. I’ll be long gone by the time you read this. Love you, -Wilbur’.” There was a pause.

“He’s going to get himself killed.” Phil all but whispered.

Techno pressed a hand into his eyes, leaning down and resting his head on the counter. *Fuck.*

“...What do you need me to do?”

A beat of silence passed.

“If anyone can find him...” Phil trailed off.

It's the private investigator in the family. Techno finished in his own mind. He sighed.

“...Okay.”

There was a sob of relief on the other end.

“Thank you, Tech, thank you so much- I know how difficult it is-”

But I don't. He thought solemnly. I've pushed you both away, I've cut ties, it won't hurt me nearly as much as it will hurt you.

“It's okay Phil.” His voice was more gravely than usual. “I'll handle it. I'll bring him home. He'll be okay.” The last part was very nearly a whisper, a promise he didn't want to make.

They exchanged goodbyes, and the call ended.

He dropped the phone onto the counter with a clatter.

...Guess he better pack.

“THEY’VE GOT A COWBOY MUSEUM!”

Wilbur laughed and shook his head. “I seriously doubt that’s going to be exciting enough to keep you entertained.”

Tommy scoffed, swiping on Wilbur’s phone. “Well it’s *Oklahoma City*,” He snapped back. “I seriously doubt there’s going to be anything *more* exciting than that.”

The brunette snorted, reaching over to turn the music up louder. Tommy perked up slightly, looking a bit like a golden retriever who heard someone say ‘ball’.

Wilbur grinned at him. “You like this song?”

“I don’t really listen to music.” The blonde admitted.

The older boy hummed in acknowledgement. That made sense. Probably didn’t have the time to get a spotify account on the streets.

This was a good song though. “*Life’s too short to even care at all, I’m losing my mind, losing my mind, losing control.*” He sang along, glancing occasionally at the teen in the passenger seat who sat enraptured by the radio.

“If I could find a way to see this straight I’d run away,

To some fortune that I should have found by now.

And so I run to the things they said could restore me,

Restore life the way it should be.

I’m waiting for this cough syrup to come down.”

Oklahoma City was...well it was a city in Oklahoma, what can he say, it's not like he got in the van and went 'Oh god you know where I need to see? Oklahoma City.' No- they were just passing through, and it wasn't even the first city they'd gone by since they left Kansas City (Could anyone in the Midwest come up with names other than 'insert-state-name + City' when they were building this country? For fucks sake-) but Tommy was getting stir crazy and Wilbur figured he didn't want to drive forever so they walked around a bit.

“They’ve got a banjo museum.” Wilbur muttered as he looked up interesting places in the city. Tommy peaked over his shoulder.

“YOU DID NOT SCROLL PAST THE TANKS TO TALK ABOUT BANJOS.” He snatched the phone from him.

“Tommy-!” He tried to grab it back but relented after only a moment.

“It’s like two blocks away too!”

“You really want to go see *tanks*? ”

“Look me in the eye and ask that again.”

They went and saw the tanks.

Tommy at least, found the military museum very entertaining, especially because Wilbur didn't and he was apparently a spiteful creature.

They stopped at the giftshop on the way out, Tommy disappearing in the shelves, which was mildly concerning but hey- if he got lost that was on him.

Wilbur looked through the postcards before picking one out, and he paused as he was paying for it, debating the package of disposable cameras he noticed by the register before relenting and putting them on the counter as well.

He waited up front for Tommy and sure enough the blonde appeared by his side in a moment, looking incredibly suspicious.

Wilbur narrowed his eyes. "What did you buy?"

The boy cackled, and pulled out a toy gun from his brown paper bag. "I've got a glock, bitch!"

Wilbur put his head in his hands, instantly regretting letting the kid out of his sight.

After grabbing some greasy fast food, (*"Don't you fucking dare shoot that thing through the drive-through window, I'm not getting banned from McDonalds because you got trigger happy-"*) they were driving outside of the city again- this time going East.

"Where are we going?" Tommy asked, fiddling with the Rubik's cube again.

"Just somewhere to sleep." Wilbur said vaguely.

It was nearing ten at night before they got there.

Wilbur parked the car, then got out of the van, pulling his coat on with a grin.

“Where are we?” Tommy asked, watching him. “What are we doing?”

“State park. You’ve never left the city right?” Wilbur asked him.

Tommy shook his head, looking puzzled.

“Have you ever seen the stars, Tommy?”

The teen got out of the van, staring up at the sky with a slightly awed expression. Wilbur only laughed at him.

He looked up too. It *was* pretty cool.

The universe expanded infinitely before them, a blanket of black, studded and swirled with light millions of years old, given off from long dead stars.

Something Wilbur had never seen before, not like this, not so untouched. It was on his bucket list.

“Woah,” Tommy breathed.

“Woah.” Wilbur agreed.

There was a clunking noise and Wilbur dropped his eyes back down to earth, finding Tommy absent. His eyes widened slightly before they caught on the boy again, scrambling up the front of the van and onto the roof.

Wilbur yelped. “What are you *doing*? Are you *trying* to break my windshield?”

Tommy just grinned brightly down at him, all teeth and blue eyes, blanket wrapped around his shoulder. He patted the roof beside him.

Wilbur huffed.

“...One sec.”

He disappeared into the back of the van briefly.

Tommy was staring up at the cosmos again when he returned, and Wilbur raised the disposable camera he’d grabbed, snapping a picture of the kid on his roof.

Tommy jumped when it flashed, only making the older boy laugh.

“Oh that’s a good first picture.” He said, climbing up to sit beside the teen.

Tommy scowled. “Where’d you even get that?”

“Gift shop.” He ginned back.

That was apparently a mistake, because Tommy remembered the toy gun in his hoodie pocket and promptly shot the older boy in the forehead.

“Motherfucker!” Wilbur hissed.

Tommy cackled.

“...You have to share that blanket as punishment.” Wil grumbled.

Tommy wrinkled his nose in distaste but shifted the woolen blanket so that Wilbur could drape it over his own shoulders too.

They sat like that for a while, watching the stars above creep unnoticeably across the sky, snickering and chatting, huddled against the biting wind.

When their hands became too stiff from the cold to even move they finally slid off the roof, retiring to the back of the van for the night, significantly warmer curled up inside than they'd been at the start of their first night.

Tommy pointed his gun at the older boy as they drove, then snapped a picture.

Wilbur sent him a withering glare as he descended into giggles.

“HEHE- that’s a good one!”

The other boy scowled at the windshield. “What the fuck- don’t waste the film!”

Tommy only laughed at him, kicking his fuzzy sock clad feet up onto the dashboard. “Just buy more! You’ve already got like eight of these-” He waved the first disposable camera around.

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “I don’t have infinite money, Tommy. Those eight are all we’ve got.”

The blonde wrinkled his nose, though Wilbur couldn’t really see it, what with his eyes trained on the road.

“You are rich.”

That made Wilbur laugh. “No I’m fucking not!”

“Are too. You buy a restaurant meal everyday. Even though we’ve got food in the back. Poor people don’t waste money like that.”

Wilbur creased his brow, rubbing his temple as he navigated down the fairly empty interstate.

Okay so he probably *should* stop doing that- but Tommy was just so *lanky*, it worried him. Obviously it was to be expected -the kid was homeless- but he was with Wilbur now and granted Wilbur didn’t have all that much but he could make sure the kid got up to a healthy weight at the very least. Tommy had gotten *at least* one big warm meal a day for the last week and a half.

The older boy's eyes flicked to him briefly with a frown.

“Are those my socks?”

Tommy was leaned back with his eyes closed now, and he didn't bother to open them when he replied.

“What’s yours is mine, big man.”

Wilbur sputtered at that but he found he wasn’t all that angry. “Don’t get sand in them.”

“Why are we driving through the desert anyways?”

Wilbur paused.

“We’re on Route 66?”

“...Okay?”

Wilbur snorted. “It’s one of the most traveled cross-country trips in the U.S.”

Tommy pulled up the maps app on Wilbur’s phone.

“This road doesn’t say 66 on it.”

Wilbur’s face actually lit up at that. “Ah- that’s because the highway itself doesn’t actually exist anymore. It was decertified in 1985- but it’s what this trip is still called. It goes from Missouri to Arizona, though we got in in Oklahoma. A lot of sections of the original route 66 are still intact though.”

Tommy was staring at him.

Wilbur started snickering. “What?”

“What the fuck?” He said. “Why do you know so much about *roads*?”

“It’s cool!” Wilbur defended through his laughter. “Also we’re *literally* driving down it, I should know.”

Tommy snorted and mumbled ‘dork’ under his breath.

Wilbur just shook his head.

“What about you? Got any hobbies?”

That made the boy pause as he considered the question. “I...I dunno. Don’t really have time for that...”

He trailed off.

Or money. Wilbur thought with a grimace.

“Fuck you.” The blonde snapped.

The brunette gave him a baffled look. “What?”

“I can *hear* you pity from here, I don’t want it bitch.”

Wilbur chuckled. “You don’t need it anymore anyway. What’s mine is yours.”

He could feel Tommy shoot him a glare when he quoted the boy.

“This road better be so fucking cool.” The teen threatened.

“I think it looks epic out here.” Wilbur stated with a smirk.

“Well you think road history is fun so your opinion is null.”

“That’s a fancy word. Do you know what it means, child?”

The blonde bristled, though he wasn’t very threatening in his too-big hoodie, fuzzy socks, and ruffled blonde hair that stuck up funny in some places.

“Yes I fucking know- how old do you think I am?!”

Wilbur bit back a smile and put on a thoughtful expression instead.

“...twelve?”

That earned him a sharp smack to his forearm.

“Hey! Don’t hit the driver, fucker!”

“Don’t fucking call me twelve! I’m sixteen!”

Wilbur's angry expression morphed into one of delight.

“Oh! A baby!”

“What the hell is wrong with you?!” Tommy snapped, looking completely mortified by the older boy's response.

“Wittle Tommy!” This time when Tommy hit him he returned it, making the blonde yelp.

It was actually almost pleasant out, not freezing cold as they stood in the afternoon sun of northern Texas.

Wilbur was smirking, watching Tommy's face morph into confusion. The blonde caught his eye and scowled.

“...I don't get it.”

Wilbur laughed loudly, the sound disappearing into the vastness that surrounded them.

He gestured to the row of graffitied cars embedded in the soil. “It's Cadillac ranch.”

Tommy's eyebrows shot up. “*Jump in the Cadillac-*”

“You're such a child.” Wilbur shook his head.

Tommy's laughter was bright and loud.

"I don't understand!"

"It's an art exhibit! One of the weirdest things on the route."

Tommy circled one of the strange vehicles, his nose wrinkling as he smirked.

"...yeah...art."

Wilbur snickered as he turned and snapped a picture with both of them in the frame- or so he hoped anyways it's not like he could check for a while.

Tommy was still humming the Bruno Mars song as they headed back to the van.

Wilbur wasn't looking and that was his fatal mistake as he took a foam bullet to the back of the head.

He immediately whirled around and charged towards the blonde, who shrieked and scrambled away.

"C'mere Tommy! I just wanna talk!"

Though there was laughter in the younger boy's eyes, his expression looked incredibly regretful.

"HEY- WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS WIL-"

He ducked behind one side of the van, still yammering negotiations. Wilbur snuck around the other side, coming up behind Tommy quickly, who screamed like he was being murdered as soon as he saw the brunette.

“Wilby I’m sorry-!” Tommy’s face immediately fell and began growing red as Wilbur started to laugh, falling against the side of the vehicle.

The blonde scowled down at him. “I don’t find anything about this very funny Wilbur-”

“*Did you just fucking call me Wilby?*” The older boy managed to cough out between the fits of laughter.

Tommy shut his mouth with a grimace.

“No. I did not.”

That answer only made Wilbur laugh harder.

“You’re *such* a prick.”

The brunette finally managed to drag himself to his feet again.

“Oh, no- it’s such a good nickname, Toms- I’ll tell you what, I’m going to get a seat cover for the drivers seat that’s got ‘Wilby’ embroidered on it-”

He was cut off as a blonde head plowed into him, knocking the wind of his chest. The scuffle continued for a few minutes, inciting more shrieks and laughter before Tommy somehow managed to get the older boy in a chokehold and he tapped out.

They laid wheezing in the dust for a few more minutes before finally getting back into the van.

Tommy slumped against his window, apparently worn from the rough-housing. “It needs a name.” He mumbled.

Wilbur gave him a quizzical look. “What?”

“The van.” Tommy elaborated. “It needs a name.”

Wilbur snorted. “It has a name.”

Blue eyes opened and peered at him from under a fluffy mane of blonde hair. “What is it?”

“The van.”

Normally that would have earned him a swipe from the boy, but he must have been too tired to bother. He just shot him a glare instead.

“You’re stupid, you know that?”

The brunette laughed. “ALRIGHT THEN, what do *you* want to name it?”

Tommy shrugged. “I dunno. Something cool like ‘*Big Man Van*’.”

Wilbur blinked at him, unimpressed.

“You call my fucking van ‘*Big Man Van*’ and we’re gonna have problems.”

Tommy snickered.

There was a pause before Wilbur started to dig through the glove compartment, pulling out a piece of paper and a blue paint marker.

He scribbled something on the paper and then folded it so that it could stand up, placing it on the dashboard.

Tommy squinted at it.

“...Camarvan?”

“That says ‘Camper van’! The fuck do you mean ‘*Camarvan*’? ”

Tommy blinked at him, looking confused.

“That does not say Camper van you fuck.”

Wilbur sighed and looked at the paper again. Okay so maybe with his shitty handwriting it looked a *bit* like ‘*Camarvan*’ but he wasn’t about to admit that.

“Can you read?”

Tommy scowled. “Yes! It fucking says Camarvan!”

“...is this because you’re homeless?” Wilbur asked quietly.

The blonde stared at him for a moment.

“*What the fuck-* No! I can read!”

Wilbur covered his mouth with his hand. “Oh my god you’re illiterate.”

“YOU’RE SUCH A DICKHEAD- I’M SORRY YOU’RE SHITTY ASS HANDWRITING IS SO BAD THAT THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHAT YOU WRITE IS YOU- AND THAT’S ONLY BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WERE TRYING TO WRITE NOT BECAUSE YOU CAN ACTUALLY READ IT EITHER!”

There was a deafening silence with the pause that followed.

“...Wow.” Wilbur said, a smile pulling at the corner of his mouth. “That was quite a reaction.”

Tommy huffed. “For fucks sa-”

They parked the Camarvan on the edge of a dirt road, overlooking a rolling canyon dotted with sparse vegetation.

Tommy stepped out of the van, mouth slightly agape as he gazed over the swooping cliff sides of burnt orange, haloed by the stars above, the Milky Way in full view.

There was laughter to his left.

Wilbur's eyes sparked with something like smugness, yet his expression seemed fond.

"Nice locale, eh?"

"It's alright..." Tommy mumbled.

"Palo Duro Canyon state park. It's the second largest canyon in the U.S."

The teen rolled his eyes.

"Christ- here we go again. What year was it made a state park?"

Wilbur looked a bit miffed but answered anyway.

"...1934."

Tommy began to laugh as the brunette scowled at him.

"Whatever child- let's go to bed, it's fucking cold out here."

Tommy was up late, fiddling with the Rubik's cube, still unable to figure out how to solve it.

Wilbur rolled over on the mattress beside him with a huff.

“What?” Tommy asked quietly, knowing full well the other boy was still awake.

“What the hell are you doing?”

“What does it look like, dumbass?”

There was a pause.

“Why are you trying to solve a Rubik’s cube in the dark?”

Tommy gave an exaggerated sigh. “I can see in the dark bitch.” He muttered.

“Just wait till tomorrow- go to sleep.”

Tommy scowled into the darkness. “I can’t.” He mumbled. “It’ll make me carsick.”

Wilbur snickered.

The blonde dropped the cube into his lap with a huff. “You wanted to go to bed so badly- just go to sleep already.”

A beat of silence passed and Tommy returned to the puzzle.

“*Please?*” Wilbur whined.

Tommy snorted and leaned over. “Are you being clingy?”

“...maybe.”

“Oh.” The blonde paused, expecting a reaction not honesty. “That sounds like a you problem.”

“Okay *first of all*- you’re the one following me around like a lost puppy-” Tommy began to sputter protests but Wilbur ignored them. “And second, it’s a fucking *you* problem now too, fucker.” And with that he yanked the blonde down to his chest, wrapping his arms around him.

Tommy stewed in his grasp for a moment. “...I should have let you freeze that night.”

Wilbur’s face was pressed into a pillow but he still laughed, muffled and low, the chest beside Tommy’s head rumbling with it.

The younger boy sighed, sinking into the warm hold a bit more, relenting to rest his head against the other.

Wilbur’s breaths evened out but his grip didn’t release in the slightest as he fell asleep. Tommy found himself slightly less upset about the situation than he made himself out to be. Even if it was a bit... *much*-

...When was the last time someone actually held him?

He couldn’t remember, and the realization of as much cut something painful into his chest.

His eyes now burned more than his face, and he figured with no one around to judge him, he could afford to snuggle a bit closer to the person who was so keen to give him everything.

Chapter End Notes

Touch starved Tommy RIP-

I wasn't going to bother with the car place until I realized they were Cadillacs AND I FUCKING HAD TO.

Also it's been like less than two weeks and Wilbur is already possessive as fuck.

By the way, in this setting Techno is basically a mercenary, he just uses the title "private investigator" for legal reason so.

Tear it up in the comments, homies, reading them is my favorite pastime no joke.

There is very little left of me and it's never coming back

Chapter Summary

There are certain things you ask of me
And there are certain things I'll lack
The beginning, we were winning
But now I'm just making up facts

Tommy and Wilbur are meandering across the country at a rather slow pace, meanwhile Wilbur's past isn't as willing to let him go as he is.

Triggers: references to poverty (idk man I'm just being careful)

Chapter Notes

I bought myself one of those Chex mix muddy buddies bags and I have no fucking clue where it went. I never even got to open it I'm so upset.

Anyways storyline is gonna start picking up soon, it's still fun though stop panicking.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sun crested the canyon walls, golden and orange, the air completely silent in the early morning.

Tommy watched it from his spot on the hood of the Camarvan.

There was clunking from inside the vehicle, and in a few moments Wilbur joined him with a fresh cup of instant coffee, made from a hot plate kept in the back.

The brunette's dark eyes glinted brightly in the dawn's light. "Even better view during the day." He nodded to the sprawling terrain before them.

Tommy hummed in agreement.

A package of pop-tarts was tossed into his lap. “Eat, Gremlin.” The older boy ordered, before returning and getting into the driver’s seat.

Tommy snorted as he opened the flimsy foil package. “What are the plans for today?”

“We’ll make it to New Mexico today. Make a pit stop at a Walmart. Get something to eat. Nothing terribly exciting.”

Tommy grunted and slid off the hood.

“Sounds like a plan, big man.”

Wilbur’s music was blaring as they pulled into the large Walmart parking lot, accompanied by their singing, unapologetically loud and slightly off key.

The back half of the lot was mostly empty so Wilbur took the opportunity to swerve around, jerking the wheel sharply and making Tommy’s head smack into his window.

“Oi! Learn how to fucking drive!” The blonde snapped as he rubbed his temple.

Wilbur on the other hand was dying with laughter. “*Donk.* HAHA- That worked perfectly-!”

Tommy grumbled curses under his breath as the van finally pulled into a parking space.

“What are we getting anyways? Food?”

Wilbur nodded. “Mostly. I have a prescription to pick up too.”

They got out of the van and Wilbur snatched a shopping cart, smirking at Tommy. “You wanna get in, child?”

Tommy flipped him off, but hopped into the cart anyway.

“Forward, bitch.” He said with a grin.

They strode into the massive building, not getting even a second look from the workers who had seen far stranger things than a sixteen year old getting pushed around in a shopping cart.

They headed to the grocery section first, stocking up on non-perishables, though Tommy begged for an apple when they passed them and Wilbur wasn’t going to say no to a piece of fruit.

“Wait!” The blonde cried as they nearly passed the drinks aisle.

“What?”

“COKE.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “Jesus- you do *not* need more sugar.”

Tommy turned in the cart, bright blue eyes boring holes into Wilbur’s soul. The brunette frowned.

“Stop that.”

“But it’s *coke*. ”

“You’ll order it anyway when we get something to eat later-”

“But *canned coke*. ”

Wilbur stared at him. “What’s the difference?”

“It’s just better, Wil.”

The older boy sighed, but made no move to go down the aisle. “I need an actual reason.”

“I’ll-” The teen paused, something like distaste twisting his face. “...I’ll let you be clingy.”

Wilbur’s eyebrows shot into his fringe as he barked a laugh. “Like you could stop me!”

Tommy scowled. “No...I’ll be miserable. It’ll be horrible, just horrible.”

Wilbur leaned on the handle of the cart, smirking.

“Fine. Deal.”

Tommy practically buzzed in the cart, surrounded by groceries as he was. The pair headed towards the pharmacy section, Wilbur tossing a first aid pack into the cart as they went.

“Wilbur Soot. 9/14/1996.” The older boy told the woman behind the counter. She returned with a package a few moments later.

He turned back to Tommy. “Alright let’s head out.”

“Oooh!” Wilbur exclaimed suddenly, making Tommy’s head snap up to the road before them. “Look- a thrift shop!” He pointed to one of those roadside antique places that were scattered across the country.

Tommy blinked. “...Yeah?”

“You want to go in?” Wilbur asked, looking far too excited for Tommy to say no.

“Uh- sure. What are we looking for?”

The older boy shrugged. “Clothes probably.”

Tommy was just more confused at that answer as they pulled into the gravel parking lot.

Wilbur parked the car and glanced at the blonde. “What?” He asked him.

Tommy shifted. “I dunno- just, we don’t have to, I don’t need more clothes if money is an issue-”

Wilbur frowned. “It’s just for fun. Money isn’t a problem right now.”

“Then why...” Tommy paused. He was used to buying second hand, it was the only thing he could afford, and if Wilbur thought they needed to get used clothes it worried him.

“...It’s like- trendy now, you know.” The older boy offered.

Tommy looked up at him. “What?”

“Thrift shopping.” Wilbur added. “It’s ‘in’ now, I guess.” He shrugged. “My friend Niki and I used to go together. It’s nice...if you do it for fun and not because...you know.”

You have to. Tommy finished for him. “Oh. Okay. Cool.”

Wilbur smiled brightly. “Alright, c’mon!”

Tommy supposed it *was* a bit fun, but that might’ve just been because Wilbur was with him, instead of the actual clothes.

They quipped over the racks, holding up atrocious finds occasionally and laughing at them.

Tommy’s eye caught on a jumper that matched the color of the van and pulled it out. It read *Sunday club* on the front in bright lettering.

“Oh you’ve got to get that.” Wilbur said, coming up behind him.

“Yeah?” Tommy asked, unsure.

“Yeah, that's a good one.” Wilbur grinned at him.

Tommy added it to their growing pile.

They left a few minutes later, a couple of bags of new (used technically) clothes tossed in the back of the van.

They sat parked in the vehicle for a while longer, Wilbur bringing out his guitar to tune it while Tommy messed with the Rubik's cube yet again.

The blonde looked up to find Wilbur scowling at the puzzle in his hands. He laughed at the older boy's expression. “Why do you hate the cube so much?!”

Wilbur snorted as he sat back against the door of the van. “I don't...it's just a toy...”

Tommy raised an eyebrow. “Bullshit. You're so mean to it.”

That made the older boy laugh. “I've never done anything to the damn cube!”

Tommy twisted one of the rows on the thing, getting no closer to solving it. “Fine then.” He muttered. “Keep your secrets.”

There was a pause and his focus was drawn back to the puzzle.

“...It was my brother's.” The older boy admitted.

Tommy paused with a frown. “You have a brother?”

Wilbur tensed. "Kind of. Not really."

The blue eyes flicked down to the cube and back up again.

"...So why do you have it?"

Wilbur sighed through his nose, then shrugged. "Guess he left it in here. He left a lot of things behind."

There was a tense silence.

"Is he..." Tommy began, and Wilbur raised his eyebrows when the boy trailed off.

"What?"

"Is he dead?"

The brunette blinked, then laughed. "Oh! No, he's not dead. Just a real asshole, that's all."

"Oh." Tommy said and relaxed a bit. He would feel shitty if he was messing with Wilbur's dead brother's stuff.

His brow furrowed. "...What happened?"

There was a beat of silence.

For all that the pair had shared in the past two weeks, Tommy had never learned much about Wilbur's family besides the initial 'I left my dad behind when I dipped', and that was intentional. Tommy had a feeling the older boy didn't want to talk about his family, so he didn't push it. By comparison Wilbur never asked about Tommy's time on the streets.

"He...just cut me off. Things got rough and..." The brunette shrugged, eyes on the floor as he fiddled with the tuning pegs of his guitar. "He left." The boy laughed bitterly.

"Thought he was my family. Guess I was wrong."

Tommy was frowning. "Do...do you have any other family?"

Wilbur looked back up at him, dark eyes studying him.

"Just my parents."

Tommy nodded, wondering if he would go on. He did.

Wilbur sighed. "My mother died several years ago. She...she was sick. It's just my dad now and..." He trailed off.

"...and you left him." Tommy finished.

The brunette's face twisted.

"I did."

"Why?"

Wilbur sighed, running a hand through his hair. “It’s...complicated Tommy-”

“Sure, Wil. Is that why you always buy postcards?” Tommy’s eyes were in his lap now.

“I-” Wilbur paused. “Yeah.”

“But you don’t send them.”

“No.”

Tommy rolled his eyes. “I don’t get you.”

There was a small smile on the older boy’s face. “Oh now that’s just not true.”

The blonde scowled.

Wilbur began to put the guitar back into its case. “You probably get me better than anyone I’ve ever met.” He looked up with a smirk as the metal clasps on the case clicked shut.

“Which is impressive because you barely know me.”

That only reminded Tommy that he had met him little more than two weeks ago.

It didn’t seem possible. For Wilbur to have been in his life for so little. But loyalty was Tommy’s fatal flaw, it had burned him before.

He shouldn’t trust Wilbur.

And in a way he didn't. In a way he was waiting for the inevitable day the man left him on the side of the road.

When Tommy finally pushed his boundaries too far.

Was too loud, too brash, too *annoying*.

And he would leave, just like everyone else did.

But Tommy found, as much as he rued that day, he still couldn't bring himself to push Wilbur away.

He was here. For as long as Wil would have him.

No matter how much it hurt when he left.

“You’re sulking.” Wilbur noted.

The sun had long since set. They’d gotten dinner and found somewhere to park for the night, and Tommy had barely said a word since that afternoon.

He shifted in his spot, about a foot away from the other boy, which was a bit unusual as of late.

“...No ‘m not. Fuck off.”

Wilbur chuckled in the darkness, only one side of his face visible in the moonlight streaming through the van windows.

“Tommy...”

“We should get those glow in the dark star thingies.” Tommy said instead. “You know, the ones you can stick to your ceilings? They’d look sick in here.”

The other boy snorted. “God, you’re such a child-”

“Fuck off.”

“-No I know I say that a lot, but I mean this genuinely, *you are a child-*”

He was cut off as Tommy chucked a pillow at his face.

Wilbur sighed. “Okay, *now* will you tell me what’s going on?”

Tommy glared at him.

“There’s nothing ‘*going on*’ you’re just crazy.”

“Crazy?”

“You let a random teenager live in your van with you two minutes after meeting him, yes you’re crazy. Fucking loon, you are.”

Wilbur sputtered. "W- you begged me to!"

"Yeah but I wasn't expecting you to say yes!"

There was a pause.

"...Are you homesick?" Wilbur asked quietly. "Is that what this is?"

Tommy blinked. "What? No, I-"

"If you want to go back...I understand."

"Wilbur, I don't want to fucking go back!" Tommy huffed and sat back against the car seat he was leaned against. "There's nothing there for me anyway." He muttered bitterly.

A beat of silence passed before Wilbur spoke again.

"I can't help if you won't tell me."

"There's nothing to help..." Tommy paused. "I just- I don't get it." He almost whispered.

"Get what?"

Tommy glared at him through the darkness. "Can you just let me go to sleep?"

"...Over there?"

“Yes.” Tommy snapped.

“...Not to be an ass but we *did* have a deal.”

The younger boy clicked his teeth shut with a huff. “Yeah, well...” He trailed off, not quite sure how to defend against that.

Wilbur shifted close, “Look- forget about the deal, it was just a joke. Tell me what’s bothering you.”

Tommy was feeling a bit like a trapped animal, all bristled fur and gnashing teeth-

More scared and untrusting than anything else.

A hand appeared on his shoulder.

“Tommy?”

“Why did you leave, Wil?” He asked.

That made the older boy pause.

“I...what does that have to do with anything?”

Tommy hesitated. But it really was bothering him.

“Your family...are they bad people?”

He thought Wilbur's face might have softened in the dim light. "Oh...no, Tommy they aren't. They're- they're actually pretty good."

Tommy took a breath, the bitterness he felt becoming palpable on his tongue.

"Then... *why*?"

"...Why did I leave them?"

Tommy nodded.

"I just...I had to. The life I was living...it wasn't- it wasn't enough. I had to do something about it."

Tommy stared at him.

"You...you had a *perfectly* good family...and you *left* them, because it 'wasn't enough'?"

The older boy winced, and then froze, face going slack. "Oh, I- Tommy I'm sorry, I didn't mean-"

"I don't care." Tommy said quickly, though his voice shook. "It doesn't matter."

Long arms wrapped around his shoulders, pulling him close. The younger boy took a shuddering breath as he was tucked under Wilbur's chin.

"I know what I did probably looks shitty, especially to someone with your past-"

“No-!” Tommy tried to assure. “I don’t- it’s not like-” He took a breath. “I’m not *jealous*- I don’t care.”

He had a feeling his attempts to convince the brunette were futile.

He swallowed thickly. “I just need you to know, you’re a prick.”

Wilbur chuckled, but he sounded sad.

“I know. I’m selfish Tommy, I *know* that. I’ve accepted it. I can’t afford to put other people’s wishes before my own anymore.”

“...Why do you keep me around then?” Tommy mumbled into his shirt.

“Because I like you.” Tommy could almost hear the smile on his lips. “I keep you around because I want you around. I’m not planning on letting you go anytime soon by the way...”

Tommy laughed wetly.

“...Bein’ clingy again.” He mumbled.

Wilbur ignored him. “Besides,” He said, laying back down with a sigh and pulling Tommy with him, despite his ‘mrph’ of protest.

“It’s not like I left my entire family behind.”

Tommy knitted his brows, confused. “Hmm?”

A hand began to card gently through his hair, and he relaxed with a soft sigh.

“Well I’ve got you here, haven’t I?”

Tommy took a moment to process that. “...Oh.”

Wilbur hummed, hand going still but resting on Tommy’s head.

“Oh.” Tommy repeated, softer, while the other fell asleep.

“We’re like brothers.” He mumbled to no one. The blonde smiled sleepily to himself at the thought.

Actually... he didn’t resent Wilbur for leaving his family, the one thing Tommy so desperately wanted yet never had.

...Not if Wil was being *his* family in exchange, anyway.

Family was messy.

It was warm and soft, all open arms and kind smiles (if you were lucky). But it was also yelling, fights and quarrels, resentment that lasted and grudges that wouldn’t fade. It was pain. Goodbyes and tears. Cold floors that smelled of antiseptic, and a doctor telling you she’s got a few hours left.

And sometimes,

Despite everything,

Family broke.

Techno had been on the road for the better part of three weeks, trying his absolute best to track down his estranged brother. It was difficult. The fucker knew what he was doing. Wil hadn't used his credit card since he left Kansas City, probably just cash, and Techno had a feeling if he used...less than legal means to look at the man's bank transactions Wilbur would report him immediately.

However-

Wilbur still had to refill his meds. And that was all Techno needed. Granted Wilbur probably figured that putting one location out once every couple of months wouldn't be enough to track him down, but Techno was determined. He went to the Walmart in New Mexico, and started to search from there. It was obvious that Wil was headed West, (*Please let him NOT be heading to Techno's place in San Francisco-*) so he followed common travel routes in the area going that direction.

And that was when Techno realized that they were following Route 66.

The same road trip Wilbur used to spit facts about at random. *Of course* that's what he would do.

Techno parked his motorcycle outside some tourist trap looking restaurant near the border of New Mexico and Arizona.

It didn't *look* like somewhere Wilbur would stop, and yet-

There was the van, in all of its cyan glory, looking a bit dusty from a couple of weeks in the desert.

Techno approached it with trepidation, but clearly Wilbur wasn't inside it currently.

He peeked through the windows. It looked very lived in, if not a bit confusing. For one thing there was a sign that read...Campervan? It looked almost like 'Camarvan' with Wil's god awful handwriting.

There was also an *absurd* amount of coke cans lining the dashboard like decorations, and blankets strew across the passenger seat.

Techno frowned. Since when did Wilbur even like coke?

Maybe he had missed some things while he was avoiding his family.

Techno waited outside the van, nerves making his fingers twitch and his leg shake.

After maybe twenty minutes a familiar dark haired figure left the restaurant, framed by the sky in the fading light of the evening. Techno froze as the brunette paced along the sidewalk, eyes trained on the phone in his hands, an unreadable expression on his face.

With a pang of his chest, Techno noticed how different his brother looked from the last time he saw him.

He was...more worn.

The door to the restaurant opened again and someone else stepped out, though Techno didn't pay him much attention.

That is, until the blonde figure snuck up behind Wilbur with a devilish grin and kicked the man's leg out from under him.

Techno almost started forward until loud laughter reached his ears.

Wilbur scrambled up from the dust, yelling something at the blonde who was nearly rolling with laughter.

With a huff his brother threw an arm over the kid's shoulders and started across the parking lot, the other boy talking non-stop.

Techno almost forgot what he was here for, the scene threw him so much.

And then the blonde kid at Wil's side caught sight of Techno leaned against the van and froze in his tracks, words dying in his throat.

Wilbur paused, and followed his line of sight until his eyes met Techno's.

Techno nodded to him. "...Evenin'..."

Wilbur dropped his arm from his companion's shoulder, stepping forward with a scathing glare.

"What the fuck are you doing here?"

Techno shrugged, eyes trailing across the parking lot. "Maybe I just like...uh-" He squinted at the dusty sign on the restaurant side. "...McPuffy's homestyle cooking."

Wilbur didn't find the joke very amusing. "Oh I'm sure, because I know *damn well* you didn't show up here, in fucking *New Mexico*, to track me down after cutting me off for years! *Years!*!"

The pink-haired man winced. "Wil-"

"Don't fucking start-! I don't want to hear it. Get off of my van and crawl back to wherever you chose to hide from your problems." Wilbur spat bitterly.

"Phil is worried."

That made his brother pause.

Techno raised an eyebrow. "You couldn't even call? Tell him you're not-"

"Dead?" Wilbur finished, something dark in his eyes. "Yeah that's really not something you should be worrying about, is it?"

Techno's expression didn't change, but his chest twisted sickeningly.

"I might deserve this, but Dad doesn't."

The brunette scowled. "Whatever. Go tell him I'm fine then. *Happy* even." He turned and motioned to the boy behind him. "C'mon Tommy, let's go."

The boy- Tommy apparently- had been watching the conversation with wide blue eyes, but stepped past Techno when prompted by Wil and climbed into the passenger side door, glancing behind him through the right side mirror.

Wilbur was moving towards the other door.

“What’s with the kid?” Techno asked.

Wilbur paused and turned back a strange sort of smile on his lips. “His name is Tommy.”

“Yeah I got that, why though?”

Wilbur shrugged. “Why not?”

Techno was confused.

“...Just seems cruel is all.”

Wilbur’s expression darkened at that.

“Go home, Techno.”

And with that his brother got into his van and started it, pulling away as Techno watched after him. The taillights glowed down the road as they left.

Techno sighed. He wasn’t expecting this to be easy, not by any means. Nor was he expecting Wilbur to be happy to see him but-

He wasn’t giving up on Wilbur yet. He might not have had the stomach to stick around, but he couldn’t knowingly let Wilbur wear himself to the bone driving across the country, clearly in a less than stable state.

Techno got back onto his motorcycle, pulling his helmet on with his eyes trained on the fading lights in the distance.

Chapter End Notes

Techno: ...the fuck is that?

Wil: that's my emotional support feral child.

Don't you know that all I need 's little bit of company

Chapter Summary

Wilbur is confronted with his condition. Techno grapples with Tommy's and Wil's relationship.

Trigger warnings: mentions of illness, loss of a family member, terminal illness, and cancer.

Calm down no one is dying yet but I am dropping a massive bombshell on you so.

Chapter Notes

I DIDNT HAVE FUCKING SERVICE OR POWER FOR LIKE A DAY FML I STILL MANAGED TO WRITE THIS BITCH THOUGH.

Hopefully it's posted before I go to work.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The van was awkwardly silent.

“...We’re gonna talk about that right?” Tommy asked after several minutes.

“I-” Wilbur sighed, running a hair through his hair. “It doesn’t matter.”

Tommy scoffed. “You looked like you were about to shank the man.”

Wilbur glanced at the rear view mirror and made a noise of frustration. “It’s my fucking brother.”

“What?” The blonde questioned. “As in the guy you like- hate for whatever reason? That brother?”

“Yes. My not-brother brother.”

“Rubik’s cube guy?”

“Yes.” The brunette huffed.

Tommy glanced at the toy, resting on the floor between their seats.

“Oh.”

Wilbur snorted. “Yeah. And now he’s following us.”

“He’s fucking what?”

Tommy scrambled out of his chair and into the back of the van, peering out the back window.

“What the hell are you doing?!?” Wilbur called from the front. “Come back here and put your damn seat belt on!”

“Oh he’s got a motorcycle!”

“I know.” The older boy grumbled.

“Why didn’t you say anything?”

Tommy looked back to find a strange look on the reflection of Wilbur's face in the rear view mirror.

“Why would I have?”

“Cause it's cool!”

Wil scowled. “Whatever. It's a fucking wrench in our plans right now.”

“What does he want?”

The older boy propped his head up against the window. “Probably wants me to go home...”

“Oh.” Tommy turned back to watch the glinting motorbike in the distance. Wilbur probably resented him for a reason, and if he was here for Wil, Tommy doubted he'd be keen to take back the scruffy teen Wilbur had picked up along the way.

“He'll catch up eventually Wil, you can't drive nonstop. Let's get him to go away now rather than later.”

“I tried to get him to leave and he wouldn't listen!”

“Did you hear what he had to say or just yell at him?”

The brunette scowled but signaled to pull over.

“Besides,” Tommy grinned as the older boy got out of the driver's seat and opened the back doors. “If he tries to take you by force I'll fuck him up.”

Wilbur sat down beside him, swinging his legs out of the back doors. He glanced to Tommy with an amused look. “Whatever, Gremlin.”

It didn't take his brother long to catch up once they stopped. The wheels of the dark motorcycle crunched in the dirt as he pulled up alongside the van.

The man pulled off his helmet, his low pink bun a bit more mussed than it had been in the parking lot.

He studied Tommy for a moment before looking to Wilbur. “Are we going to have a conversation like adults now?”

Wil folded his arms. “I want you to stop.”

“And I want you to-” the other man paused, eyes flicking back to Tommy briefly. “Does the kid know?”

“Probably not.” Tommy offered.

Wilbur glared at his brother, shifting in place. “No.”

“...Are you?”

“Not today.”

Tommy tried not to be hurt by that, after all there were some things he didn't want Wilbur to know either. How he didn't like going through the big cities, how lonely he used to be, what Tommy really thought of that one song Wilbur played a few too many times, etc.

Still, he wanted the older boy to trust him as much as Tommy did him.

The pink haired man tilted his head.

“Do you really want to have this conversation in front of him?”

There was a pause.

Wilbur nudged him.

“...is it alright-”

“Yeah, of course.” Tommy said quickly, and turned to climb back into his seat up front.

Wilbur nodded to him as he closed the doors to the van, and Tommy watched in the mirror as he and his brother retreated a little ways away, having a heated conversation.

“So where'd you find the kid? The Walmart parking lot?” Techno asked.

“You don't actually care about Tommy so cut to the chase.” Wilbur snapped.

Techno's jaw clenched and his jacket fluttered in the wind.

“...Alright then. What the hell are you doing?”

Wilbur couldn't help the smug smirk that crawled onto his face.

“Just living a little, *Tech*. Actually enjoying life, for once.”

His brother's dark brown eyes found his.

“Do you really have to kill yourself to do it?”

Wilbur huffed, smile twitching in the slightest. “I'm not dead yet.”

“Yet.”

The brunette turned in place, scuffing his foot on the gravelly shoulder of the highway.

“Did you really come all the way out here to remind me?” He looked up again. “I'm well aware, Technoblade, I don't need you to tell me that I'm dying.”

If Wilbur hadn't known any better, he would have thought that Techno's face crumpled slightly at his words.

“I know. I'm just saying...you don't have to throw away what time you have left-”

“Why?” Wilbur stepped forward. “So I can rot away in Kansas City? Counting down my days with a pill box?” He shook his head.

“I’d rather spend six months out here than a year doing that.”

Techno stared at him.

“You won’t get six months at this rate- you’ll be lucky if you get half that! You’re wearing yourself ragged and for what? Fast food and some *orphan*? ”

Wilbur’s face twisted. “Leave Tommy the hell alone-!”

“No! If you’re gonna die to spend time *road tripping* with this kid I’m going to pick him apart!”

“Why do you care all of sudden?” The brunette hissed. “You were content to let me die in fucking Missouri, what difference does it make that I spend my remaining time out here?”

His brother clenched his jaw. “Because. That’s unavoidable, *this* isn’t.”

There was a pause, the pair of brothers standing at an impasse, one accepting of their fate, the other refusing to come to terms with it.

Wilbur laughed, cold and bitter. “What do you want from me, Techno? Cause I’m not going back.”

His brother gave an exasperated huff.

“You’re so fucking stubborn, Wil.”

The brunette simply shrugged.

Techno studied him for a moment. His brother was thinner, eyes bags a bit darker, cheeks a little more sunken. It might have been unnoticeable unless you hadn't seen him in months. Like Techno had.

“...You missed your followup appointment.”

Wilbur actually laughed at that. “Are you *joking*? ”

Techno didn't even blink. “...Phil had it transferred to some doctor friend he's got out here-”

“You told him where I was?”

“Of course I did.” Techno snapped. “...he's the one who asked me to find you.”

Wilbur nodded grimly. “...should've known you wouldn't have done it on your own.”

“You needed help, I came, what more do you want-”

“I needed you long before this whole thing.”

There was a solemn pause.

“...would you please go to this appointment?”

Wilbur took a slow breath. "I can't."

"What? Why not?"

"I don't want to leave Tommy alone."

Techno frowned. "He's like what- seventeen?"

"Sixteen. But he'd get worried."

Techno huffed.

"Maybe if you would tell him-"

"No." Wilbur snapped. "...he doesn't need to deal with it."

Techno sighed, rubbing his face.

"If you go to this doctor...I'll babysit your kid."

Wilbur stared at him. "That's the worst idea I've ever heard."

The older boy threw up his hands. "Then what the hell can I do to get you to go to this stupid appointment? Cause you might be ready to die, but I'm not ready to watch!"

Wilbur paused.

“...you’ll stay with Tommy?”

Techno rolled his eyes. “I said that, didn’t I?”

“And you won’t tell him?”

“About the cancer? No...but Wil-”

“Fine. I’ll go then.” The brunette turned and started back towards the van.

“You’ll have to be honest eventually...unless your plan is to dump him somewhere.”

Wilbur turned back with a scowl on his face. “I’m not leaving him anywhere.”

“Then what are you going to do with him? What the *hell* is that kid going to do when you’re gone?”

Wilbur’s gaze was trained on the setting sun in the distance.

“...Don’t worry about it. It’s my problem.”

The van shook slightly, though Tommy couldn’t see what was going on. After a minute Wilbur came and got in the driver’s seat, hands clenching the steering wheel.

“Uh...” Tommy began before he was cut off by the back door of the van opening, making him jump.

Wilbur’s brother climbed in, sitting just behind the front seats and pausing when he found Tommy staring at him.

“Evenin’...”

Tommy glanced to Wilbur, who simply huffed as he started the van.

He looked back at the other. “...Hi.”

“He’s going to come with us for a little while.” The brunette explained.

“Oh.” Tommy blinked. “Really?”

The man in the back nodded.

Tommy’s eyebrows shot up, and he looked to Wilbur, half a grin on his face.

“...*Lads on tour?*” He whispered.

Wilbur shot him a look. “No. He’s not.”

His brother had a puzzled expression. “What’s...’Lads on tour’?”

Tommy opened his mouth to answer but Wilbur beat him to it.

“It’s what Tommy is calling the trip.”

“...Oh.”

Tommy sat back in his seat, still eyeing the newcomer with badly concealed curiosity as they started down the highway once more.

“Wait what about your motorcycle?” He asked suddenly.

“Put it on the carrier.” The man grunted.

“Oh, *that’s* what that metal thing is.”

Wilbur nodded, looking already more tired than usual.

“What did you think it was?” His brother asked from the back.

Tommy shrugged.

“That’s where we put misbehaving children.” Wilbur muttered.

Tommy nodded in agreement then shot the brunette a scowl.

There was a pause.

“How about...Lads on tour...*plus*-” He paused and turned around again.

Wilbur’s brother blinked at him. “...you can call me Techno.”

Tommy sputtered. “*Techno*? That’s a shit nickname.”

Wilbur cackled. “You should hear his actual name!”

“Fuck off.” Techno growled.

The brunette glanced at Tommy, eyes dancing. “Technoblade.” He said smugly.

There was a beat of silence before the two boys up front burst into laughter.

Techno huffed. “...should have stayed on the motorcycle.”

“I thought *Wilbur* was a weird name but *Techno-blade*?!” The blonde wheezed, enunciating the latter’s name strangely.

“Just Technoblade- fluid. Or Techno. Don’t chop it up-”

“*The blade*.” Tommy said dramatically.

“...No.”

Tommy nodded though. “No that’s very good. I like that one.”

Techno narrowed his eyes at him. "...so where did you come from anyway?"

"Don't answer that." Wilbur said flatly.

Tommy laughed. "Why? Aren't you proud of me, Wil?"

The brunette scowled. "...of course...my little Toms-" he reached over and ruffled the blonde mane on the boy's head, and Tommy smacked his hand away.

Wilbur smirked and put two hands on the wheel again. "But he'd berate me." He admitted.

Tommy turned back to Techno, finding him watching the pair with a very confused look- however he snapped out of it when his brother mentioned him.

"Why? What did you do?" He questioned.

"Nothing." Wilbur snapped, but Techno was studying him through narrowed eyes and Tommy was stifling laughter. He sighed. "...you always told me to change the locks-"

"Did he break in?!"

Tommy laughed loudly, both at Wilbur's red face and Technoblade's gaping mouth.

The blade turned to him. "You- did you- did you fucking sneak into the van?"

"It's my van, bitch!"

Techno stared and him, the whirled to Wilbur who was chuckling as well.

“It’s a- it’s a funny story, actually-”

“Wilbur please do not tell me this kid broke into your van, and then you just decided to *keep him.*”

There was a pause.

“Well when you put it like that-”

Tommy burst out laughing yet again, and Techno pulled out his phone with a sigh.

“What are you doing?” Wilbur asked, alarmed, watching him through the rear view mirror.

“I’m calling Phil.” The other answered simply.

Tommy looked between the two as Wilbur whipped around, making a grab for the phone.
“Who’s Phil?”

“Hey! Eyes on the road moron! You don’t want to get into a car crash with your ankle biter here-”

“Hey bitch! I don’t bite ankles!” Tommy yelled. “I go for the jugular!”

“DO NOT. CALL HIM.” Wilbur ordered, facing forward again.

“Why? If you’re adopting a feral child he should know.”

Tommy glared at him. “Stop calling me a child, it’s getting annoying.”

“I’m not adopting anyone.” Wilbur snapped.

There was a pause.

“If *he*’s adopting a feral child, he should know.”

Tommy blinked at Wilbur. “Who’s adopting me?”

Wilbur glanced to him. “...he’s joking.”

“Am I?” Techno asked from the back. “Because that’s seems to be where you’re headed with this.”

“I am confused.” Tommy declared loudly. “Someone explain.”

“I’ve got a doctor appointment I missed.” Wilbur changed the subject abruptly. He glanced at Tommy. “Techno is going to hang out with you while I’m doing that.”

Tommy blinked.

“...I don’t need a babysitter, Wil. I lived on the streets for years I can go for an hour or two without you.”

“Okay well-” Wilbur’s face screwed up.

“It’s more for his peace of mind than yours.” Techno offered from behind them.

“Shut up.” The brunette spat.

Tommy huffed and sat back in his seat. Then he leaned over and poked Wilbur in the ribs.

“We’re still going to *the pit*, eh?”

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “Stop calling it- yes we’re going. This won’t take long.”

Tommy nodded, satisfied.

“...the fuck is ‘the pit’?” Techno asked.

“I’m not going to a fighting ring so you can calm down.” Wilbur muttered.

Tommy grinned over the shoulder of the seat at Techno.

“Tell me, blade, how do you feel about the Grand Canyon?”

Techno stared at him, then started laughing. You guys are going to the *Grand Canyon*?”

Tommy nodded cheerily and Wilbur only snorted.

Techno's eyes flicked between them, and he shrugged. "Cool, I guess."

"He's only allowed one coke per day, and he had it at lunch so don't fall for his shit."

Techno snorted. "Give him his blankie, tuck him in, blah, blah, blah. Go- you're going to be late."

Wilbur scowled, then took on a more thoughtful expression, eyes trailing to the ground. "... he does actually prefer the red blanket-"

"Oh my god." Techno huffed and shoved the brunette towards the entrance to doctor's office. "Go."

Wilbur pointed a finger at him threateningly. "Don't fuck up, I'm warning you."

Techno chuckled. "And face the wrath of Big Brother Wilbur? I think not."

The brunette shot him one more glare before turning and making his way across the parking lot.

When Techno turned back to the van the passenger seat was empty. "Oh fuck." He muttered. Did he already lose the damn kid?

He yanked open the back door, making the blonde jump in the corner.

"Oh- sorry. You weren't up front."

Tommy sputtered at him. “Okay?! Where else would have gone? Christ.”

Techno paused, noticing the object in his hand.

“...is that...is that my Rubik’s cube?”

The blue eyes widened. “Um-” he held the toy out to him.

Techno blinked. “No- it’s fine. I don’t mind or anything...just figured it got tossed or something.”

Tommy hadn’t dropped his arm.

“...should toss it, thing’s fucking broken.”

The older boy snorted, looking down at the toy. “Looks fine to me.”

Tommy huffed, letting his hand fall into the pile of blankets on the floor of the van.

“Well it’s not. I’ve been messing with it for nearly a month and I can’t solve it.”

Techno paused, then held out his hand for the puzzle. Tommy passed it over.

In less than two minutes he had the cube solved.

Tommy was staring at him mouth agape. Techno chuckled at the expression on his face. The blonde shut his jaw with a click.

“I don’t like you.” The boy decided.

He was probably joking but it still gave Techno a stab of fear- the last thing he needed was to be on bad terms with Wilbur’s favorite dumpster kid. Especially with how shaky their relationship already was.

Techno scrambled up the puzzle again and tossed it back to the blonde.

Half an hour had passed and Tommy must have gotten bored with the Rubik’s cube because Techno couldn’t hear it clicking from his spot in the drivers seat.

He sighed, shifting in place and wishing Wilbur would be done soon so Techno could return to Phil and tell him he did everything he could.

He still hadn’t called Phil, or even told him he’d found Wilbur yet. He was more worried about pissing off Wilbur and having to track him down again as a result.

Techno’s eyes caught on something in the driver’s side door and with a frown he reached down and pulled it out.

His breath caught in his throat.

It was Wilbur’s photo album.

Pictures of Phil and Kristin as they had been when Techno met them. The first time they all went to the beach together. Wilbur and Techno's twelfth birthdays, only a few weeks apart. Wilbur holding up a baby tooth, fresh gap in his smile. Kristin on the couch, arms wrapped around both boys.

Techno trailed a finger over the last one.

Just before it got bad. A few months before she died. It had devastated them.

And then a few years later Wilbur got the same diagnosis.

How was he supposed to do this all over again?

There was too much left behind. This stupid van, the heights marked on the wall at home, all of these photos, his guitar that Techno could hear right now-

Why could he hear the guitar?

He turned in his seat and stared into the back of the van.

Tommy had the guitar cradled in his arms, tongue sticking out in concentration as he clumsily picked a chord. It was a recognizable tune though. Familiar.

“What are you doing?” Techno found himself asking, voice thick.

Tommy looked up at him, music dying. “Practicing...” he replied flatly. He glanced down at the instrument. “Do you play?”

Techno shook his head, still staring.

Tommy shifted. "...Wil only just started teaching me so-"

"He's teaching you?" The older boy asked incredulously.

Tommy paused, looking confused. "Yeah...?"

The silence was deafening. What had Phil always said? '*On a scale from 1-your guitar, Wil, how important is this to you?*'

Kristin had taught him to play. Techno had never wanted to.

But also-

Wil didn't let anyone mess with his guitar.

Yet here was this scraggly street kid, in the back of his van, playing a song Techno once watched Kristin teach Wilbur and-

Maybe this kid was more important to his brother than Techno had initially thought.

Chapter End Notes

Sickbur LMAO

I'm sorry I use humor to cope. The next several chapters will be tooth rooting fluff to make up for the ending (...or to make it hurt more idk)

Also if it's not clear, Wilbur is struggling to tell Tommy about his condition because the last time he broke the news to a brother figure, said brother figure moved halfway across the country to avoid dealing with his grief. :)

Crawl in the backseat old friend

Chapter Summary

It is really all in your mind in it

The boys are bonding. Borderline crack at the beginning. ~Plot~

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this took me so long to put out, I've had a hectic schedule and I don't do time management, baby.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sun was long since set by the time Wilbur was finished.

He kicked Techno out of the driver's seat looking a little more beaten down than when he'd gone in.

“Well?” Techno asked. “Anything changed?”

Wilbur snorted, glancing into the back of the van where Tommy was.

“Yes.” He whispered. “I’m cured.”

Techno punched him in the shoulder. “That’s not what I meant asshole.”

The brunette huffed and sat down, rubbing his forehead.

“...same as the people at home. Few months.”

“...Wil-”

“It’s fine.” The brunette assured, and looked over the shoulder of his seat. “Hungry, Gremlin?” He called.

Tommy scowled up at him but Techno could see the warmth hidden beneath it.

“We ate at McPuffy’s.”

Wilbur scoffed. “Is that a no?”

Tommy crawled forward into his seat up front. “...suppose not.”

The two brothers chuckled and Techno got into the back, watching the two up front start to play what was clearly Wil’s Spotify mix, yet Tommy already knew all the lyrics to the songs.

They ended up stopping at a convenience store where Wilbur tried to convince the kid to get something more filling than a slushie but he wasn’t having it, too preoccupied with filling his cup with a little bit of every flavor.

“There’s no way that tastes good. I just watched you mix the coca-cola flavor with blue raspberry, for the love of god please stop-” Techno asked, the cursed scene robbing his tone of any emotion.

Tommy simply cackled. “I’ve got to try them all!”

“It’s not Pokémon.”

Tommy whipped around with narrowed eyes. “You don’t eat Pokémon.”

“That’s not what I *meant*-” Techno sighed.

“Tommy, look, they’ve got turducken.” Wilbur interrupted, pointing to what *looked* like a small roasted turkey on a heated display but was apparently stuffed with a duck stuffed with a chicken.

Techno blinked at it. “Why the fuck are they selling turducken at a 7-Eleven?”

“Arizona is weird, man.” Tommy muttered.

The cashier frowned at them- whether for the turducken slander or Arizona slander Techno couldn’t be sure- Tommy barely even looked up at the dude before flipping him off.

Techno snatched his hand and pulled it down, “Wil control your kid before we get kicked out.” He growled.

Wilbur was only snickering though. “Nah he’s being good- he didn’t even bring the gun.”

Techno stared at the blonde. “Why do you have a gun?”

“I am in fact- a gangster.” Tommy replied with a completely straight face.

“It’s a toy.” Wilbur offered, earning a sharp glare from the youngest.

Tommy yanked his hand from Techno’s grip with a hiss.

Techno frowned at him. “Your kid is feral.” He deadpanned.

Wilbur only grinned, throwing an arm over Tommy’s shoulder and ruffling his blonde hair, looking so at ease with the motion Techno could believe he did it all the time. “No...Tommy’s perfect.”

Tommy scowled up at the brunette but he didn’t wiggle out from under his arm, and judging by the color in his ears the compliment hit home.

“Do you want the turducken or not?” Wilbur asked the blonde.

“No! I don’t want a tur-fucken! Why would you waste money on one anyway?”

“Cause,” Wilbur flashed a cheeky smile to his brother. “Techno’s buying.”

Techno rolled his eyes but didn’t protest. Really- this whole terminal cancer thing was making him such a pushover.

“Whatever. Not hungry?” He asked Tommy one last time. The kid shook his head. Techno shrugged. “All right, let’s go.”

Wilbur huffed but didn’t push it anymore. Techno had a feeling he’d been getting as much food into the kid as he could manage but Tommy was still skittish, brazen as he appeared, and he likely already felt indebted to the older boy.

Techno almost wished he could tell him how much it meant to see Wilbur laughing for the first time in years. He didn’t owe them anything.

He paid for their snacks and they left, Tommy already skipping out into the parking lot ahead of them, hyped up on sugar and adrenaline that can only come from late night convenience store runs.

“You’re gonna get run over.” Techno called after him.

“I’d be more worried about the car that tried.” Wilbur muttered.

Techno snorted. “Because of what Tommy would do to it or what you would?”

Wilbur shot him a narrowed eyed look. “...What?”

Techno shrugged. “You’re soft, Wil.”

The brunette huffed, watching the teen run around the parking lot with a fond gaze. “What can I say...? Little bastard clawed his way into my cold, *dying* heart.”

Techno shook his head and Wil laughed at him. “What? He’ll manage it with you too! I can already see it- you’ll love the fucker.”

“I will *not*.” Techno gritted his teeth. He had one brother and one brother only. He didn’t want some annoying kid to worry about. With their family’s luck he’d end up dying too, younger than Wil, if the pattern held.

Wilbur didn’t seem convinced though he just hummed, sticking out a blue raspberry stained tongue- Tommy was so rubbing off on him- and sauntered back to the van.

Click-

Techno grabbed the foam bullet out of the air before it hit him in the forehead, slowly blinking up at the blonde teenager who had shot it from the other corner of the van. Tommy stared at him with wide eyes.

“How did you- what the fuck?!”

Wilbur glanced up from his phone with a frown. “What did you do...” He asked Techno.

“What the hell?” Techno protested, chucking the bullet at his brother. “He shot *me!* I did nothing!”

“He’s a ninja!” Tommy hissed, staring at Wilbur with wide blue eyes.

Wil settled back down at that explanation, unperturbed. “Oh.” He said to Techno. And then to Tommy, “Yeah, basically.”

The kid squawked and Techno raised an eyebrow at him. “Give me the gun, *Tommy.*”

Tommy scrambled even farther away from him, shoving himself right against Wilbur, who watched with an amused eye. “Oh hell no-” Tommy said. “You’d fucken kill me with it!”

“He doesn’t have the balls to when I’m here.” Wilbur snickered, which was true, though it apparently offered the blonde little solace.

“I just want to have a talk.” Techno assured.

“Begone bitch!” Tommy said, loading another bullet.

“You’re asking for it...” Technoblade warned.

Tommy hesitated.

He shot the bullet.

Techno dodged it fluidly and sprung forward, there was a shriek as Tommy whipped around and burrowed behind Wilbur, shoving himself between the brunette and the back of the passenger seat, screaming his head off all the way.

Techno paused just in front of them, Wilbur grinning smugly and Techno was sure he was just *loving* the excuse to have Tommy curled up at his side. “...Can I help you?” Wil asked with a smirk.

Techno huffed, blowing a loose strand of fuschia hair out of his face. “Hand him over. He must pay for his crimes.”

Tommy was gripping the back of Wilbur’s shirt muttering “Wil, Wil, Wil, *Wil, WIL-*”

“...No can do. It’s his bedtime.”

Tommy immediately looked betrayed by this statement, but apparently it was a price he was willing to pay to escape Techno’s wrath because he did nothing but scowl.

“Bedtime?” Techno repeated. “That heathen has a *bedtime*? ”

“No.” The blonde snapped. “It’s just whenever Wil gets *clingy*. ”

Wilbur hummed happily, throwing a blanket over the pair. “Little Gremlins must get at least eight hours a night.” He sang.

Tommy squawked as he was yanked out of his shelter and pulled to Wilbur’s side, fuming as the brunette settled down and began carding through the blonde’s hair.

Techno snorted but retreated to his corner of the van, attempting to go back to his book but really only managing to watch the pair from the corner of his eye.

He really wasn’t surprised that Wilbur was cuddly with the kid- he always had been more touchy, the type of person to steal hugs when you weren’t looking, or fall asleep on your shoulder during family movie night.

To be honest Techno was relieved that someone else was on the receiving end of the slightly overbearing treatment because *he* had been for years, and as much as he loved his brother it overwhelmed him at times.

Tommy on the other hand, as embarrassed as he might have been, was clearly enjoying being tucked away in Wil’s grasp.

Techno supposed it was more telling of the kid’s past than anything else. He really didn’t know all that much about where Tommy came from besides just manifesting in the van and Wilbur hadn’t indicated that he knew any more than that *either*.

He must have been a street kid though, if his hesitancy with spending money, underweight build, and blinding loyalty were any indication.

The kid had actually fallen asleep after a few minutes of Wilbur running fingers through his hair, and the older boy shifted to tuck the kid’s head under his chin, burying his nose in the blonde’s hair.

A few more moments of silence passed before Wilbur spoke.

“I don’t want to hear it.”

“I didn’t *say* anything.” Techno whispered right back.

Wil huffed, blonde hair beneath his chin stirring.

“I can hear you judging me from here.”

Techno sighed, resigning to close his book.

“...kid’s gonna end up having codependency issues, Wil.”

Wilbur curled in around the boy a bit more but made no response.

Techno huffed.

“I guess that’s not really *your* problem to deal with-”

“Fuck off.” Wilbur snapped. “He *is* my problem. I’ll figure it out...I just-”

But Techno was shaking his head. “No, Wil, you won’t. You don’t have *time* to. I know you want to do right by this kid, but everything you do for him will just come back and hurt him more when he loses you-”

“Stop.” Wilbur pleaded quietly.

Techno paused with a sigh.

Wil took a shaky breath before he spoke again.

“...I know I could have handled this better. I know that I’m too attached. But I *can’t* just-
push him away.”

“Or won’t.” Techno muttered.

“Or won’t.” He agreed. “It’s selfish. I know. You don’t have to tell me.”

It was selfish. To string the kid along, treat him like a brother, be the first person to care about him in who knows how long, just to go die a death they saw coming a mile away.

But the Wilbur before him now was different from the brother he knew. This boy was bitter and resentful, he took what he wanted and *kept* it while he still could because no one was going to stop him, least of all Techno. Techno who could barely look him in his sunken eyes. Techno who pushed him away because he couldn’t bear to lose someone he was so close with again.

Techno who had run.

He still wanted to run. He didn’t want to be here. He didn’t want to watch his brother die. It might just kill him too.

But he couldn’t bring himself to leave just yet either.

Because Wil was *right there.*

He wasn't dead yet.

Tommy awoke to Wilbur gently shaking him, bright, early morning sun streaming through the Camarvan windows.

“Wus happenin’?” He slurred into Wil’s shoulder sleepily.

“Techno is heading out, did you want to say goodbye?”

His eyes snapped open and he jumped to the back door of the van, yanking it open and blinking in the sunlight with a frown.

Techno stood a few feet away, motorcycle off the van carrier and propped up, gleaming darkly. His long pink hair was pulled into a ponytail and he was tugging on a pair of dark gloves while he smirked at Tommy.

“Mornin’.” The older boy greeted.

Tommy only scowled. “Where are you going?”

Techno paused. “...Home? *Someone* has to tell the old man that Wil isn’t dead in a ditch somewhere.” He answered with a pointed look to the brunette behind Tommy.

“Do you not have a phone?”

The blade sighed. “Yes, I have a phone, Tommy.”

There was a beat of silence.

“...Are you coming back?”

Wilbur huffed angrily from inside the vehicle. “Enough, Tommy. He doesn’t want to be here. Let him go.” The boy snapped.

Tommy was a bit disheartened by that. He thought Technoblade was pretty cool...not that he’d ever admit it out loud. He’d been a bit put off at first by his memorable introduction but he’d thought they’d gotten along fine and by the end of the night Tommy decided he didn’t mind the duo being a trio.

Except Wil had said Techno had never been one of the lads on tour, and Tommy was too thick headed to realize he *meant it*.

Techno didn’t want to be here.

“Oh...” Tommy said quietly, leaning back into the van a bit.

Techno watched them with an emotionless expression. He was good at those, Tommy had found.

“Do you want me here, Wil?”

There was a pause.

The brunette shrugged, eyes in his lap.

Technoblade watched the motion, then shifted his eyes to the dusty ground before him, jaw muscles clenching as he considered it.

Tommy fidgeted with the hem of his blanket.

“...Alright.” He decided, making the other two blink. “But you’re calling Dad.” He told Wilbur as he wheeled the motorcycle back to the carrier.

Tommy grinned but when he looked to Wilbur he was met with a sad, far away look.

Wil did that sometimes though.

He wasn’t sure why.

Wilbur sat alone on the roof of the van.

He could hear Techno and Tommy arguing about classical music below, while Nocturne No.2 blared from the stereo.

He laughed softly, eyes trailing back down to the phone screen in his hand.

If he waited long enough the battery would die. Oops. Sorry Dad.

A shaky sigh rattled his lungs as he rubbed his brow.

Why did Techno get to avoid his problems, but he couldn’t?

Favoritism.

His procrastinating was rudely interrupted as Techno's phone rang with an incoming call.

Phil's face lit up the screen, caller ID reading Dadza.

Wilbur froze.

He lit it ring once, twice, thrice-

On the fourth ring he clicked the green button in the corner of the screen, holding his breath as his father's voice hummed through the phone's speakers.

"-Hey Tech, hadn't heard from you in a while and I wanted to make sure you were okay."

There was a pause.

"Techno?"

Wilbur bit his lip, eyes screwing shut as he raised the phone to his mouth.

"Hi...Dad."

A pained sort of inhale could be heard over the line.

"Wil?"

“Yep.” His voice was thick, and a sharp pain stabbed his throat.

He could hear Phil’s sigh of relief.

“Are- are you okay?”

Wilbur smiled softly as the yelling picked up below him. “I’m great, actually.”

“Is that-? Who’s yelling?”

Wilbur laughed wetly. “That’s just Tommy and Techno having a passionate conversation about classical music.”

“Oh...wait- Who’s Tommy?”

Wilbur shifted on the roof, taking a shaky breath. How do you explain this situation without sounding completely insane?

“He’s...he’s the sixteen year old street kid I took with me on a road trip across the country.”

He let that sit for a moment.

“You fucking *what*? ”

Wilbur laughed, crossing his arms and leaning back a bit. “Yeah...”

Phil struggled to form a sentence on the other end.

“He’s a really good kid...you’d like him, I think.” Wilbur offered.

“*Christ, Wilbur-*”

“Yeah he’s really grown on me.”

“Oh my god...have you done anything else...wherever you are?”

Wil hummed. “Yeah we’ve been to lots of places. Drove Route 66, went thrift shopping, been kicked out of a few stores, Tommy and I got food poisoning once- that was terrible. We’re headed to the Grand Canyon next.”

Phil chuckled. “...You sound...happy, Wil.”

Wilbur let out a content sigh. “...I am. Really.”

“Good. I’m glad...it’s been awhile.”

“Yeah.” Wilbur agreed, with a pang to his chest. “It has.”

“Have you murdered your brother yet?”

He grumbled. “No...Tommy seems to like him so I guess he can stick around.”

His father laughed. “Tommy is the standard?”

“Absolutely.” Wilbur grinned.

Phil hummed. “...I guess I’ll have to meet him.”

“You will.” Wilbur agreed.

There was a lull in the conversation, Tommy and Techno were quiet in the van, settled on some underground video game music instead of classical.

“Are you taking care of yourself?”

Wilbur gave an exasperated sigh. “Yes...and now Techno is here to hover so you don’t have to worry...I went to your doctor friend out here.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah...” Wilbur grimaced. “I don’t know Dadza, these doctor people are starting to worry me,” He drawled sarcastically. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d think something was wrong.”

Phil chuckled sadly. “Those fuckers.”

Wil hummed. The wind was picking up, cutting through his long sleeved shirt.

“Stay safe, Wilbur.” Phil said quietly.

“Of course...I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too, Wil.”

The phone call ended.

Wilbur sighed, hand grasping the phone dropping into his lap. He rubbed the back of his neck, listening to gentle music float up through the van.

Everything was okay right now. He was content. If life would let him, he'd be willing to stay in that moment for eternity.

Time was so precious. He had so little of it.

Chapter End Notes

I have zero thoughts in my brain at this point. Give me serotonin in the comments plz and thx.

Edit* I've had a singular thought.

Wilbur: congrats, you're a father

Phil:...what?

Smile, the worst is yet to come

Chapter Summary

We'll be lucky if we see the sun.

Grand Canyon+Half of the Christmas special

Still fluff :) I estimate one more chapter of fluff after this one before things get sad but I'm also bad at estimating the length of my own writing so.

*Edit: NO Trigger warnings for this chapter, you're still safe.

Chapter Notes

I updated the playlist and the chapter title comes from one of those songs so check it out.

IM SORRY IT TOOK ME SO LONG TO UPDATE THIS IS LITERALLY THE HARDEST CHAPTER IVE EVER WRITTEN FOR ANYTHING, FOR ABSOLUTELY NO REASON ITS JUST FLUFF.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hey, Tommy...” Techno asked, as they followed the group of other visitors down the steep path towards the Colorado River, lifejackets buckled up to their chins.

“Yeah?” The blonde turned to face him.

“You know how to swim, right?”

Tommy turned and looked at Wilbur, and judging by the brunette’s face the answer was a resounding ‘no’.

“You didn’t think to mention this before we bought the tickets?!” Wilbur hissed to the blonde.

Techno blinked tiredly. “I mean...he’s got a lifejacket-”

“Oh well in *that case* let’s just throw him in!” Wilbur spat back.

Tommy laughed nervously. “In my defense- I forgot.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “How do you forget that?”

“It doesn’t come up very often in Kansas City dumpsters!”

They were getting some weird looks from the other tourists. Techno sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Look, they’ve got single tubes for going down this other section of river.” He pointed to the area on their pamphlet. “He’s less likely to drown doing that than taking a raft through some rapids with a bunch of other people.”

Wilbur sighed. “Fine.” He pointed to Tommy. “You drown I’m going to fucking murder you.”

The only problem with the circular tubes is you were guaranteed to get wet and while they all had shorts and t-shirts on, they weren’t exactly prepared.

“These won’t get stolen, right?” Tommy asked as they hid their shoes and socks in a bush.

Wilbur wrinkled his nose as he hopped around on one foot, and exchanged a look with Techno.

“No, of course not.” “Nope.” The older two answered simultaneously.

They grabbed their tubes, and Wilbur decided it was worth all the trouble as Tommy sped towards the riveredge, a grin five miles long.

Around them dusty orange stone stretched into the sky, contrasting stunningly with the blue air and white clouds. It was perfectly sunny, and Wilbur pulled some other tourist off to the side to take a picture for the trio on one of his cameras. He had brought one of them along and a ziplock bag to store it in. The three of them traded it around snapping a couple of funny shots of one another before Wilbur pocketed for later.

Then the group was off, people wading in and getting on their tubes and being slowly swept downriver.

“Stay together.” Techno ordered. “And don’t flip-”

Tommy ignored him and went to flop backwards onto his tube, immediately flipping it and getting drenched, less than thirty seconds into the excursion. He was only in the shallows though, so they weren’t worried about him immediately drowning.

Technoblade sighed while Wilbur absolutely *lost it*, laughing his head off, doubled over and nearly crying, the sound echoing off the canyon walls.

Tommy stood up, water running off his hair and clothing while he took big gasping breaths. “-’S c-cold.” He explained.

“Thank you for demonstrating how to *not* get onto a tube.” Techno said, easing onto his own.

Tommy huffed, blowing some damp hair out of his face.

They finally all managed to get onto their tubes and started floating down river.

Wilbur leaned over and grabbed the edge of Tommy's tube, then reached out for Techno, who snorted and grabbed his hand so the three tubes were connected, though Tommy wasn't too happy about it.

"Hey, bitch!" He swatted at Wilbur's hand. "Release me!"

Wil raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

"I'm a free man! Need to float on my own!"

That made the older boy snort, and he didn't release Tommy's tube.

The kid smacked his hand, and when that didn't work he sent a large wave of cold water over the brunette.

Wilbur sputtered, and then lunged towards the teen, letting go of Techno in favor of attacking the other boy.

They whacked at one another's tube, splashing and bickering and becoming more and more violent as the squabble progressed. Techno watched for a few minutes until Tommy delivered a swift kick to the older boy's spleen. Wilbur barely batted an eye but Techno flinched.

He grabbed both of their inner tubes and yanked them away, glaring pointedly at the brunette.

"Yeah! Get 'em Blade!" Tommy cheered from behind him.

Techno shoved the kid away, sending his tube bumping against the canyon wall while Techno rounded on his brother.

“What the hell?” He hissed.

Wilbur only rolled his eyes though, leaning back in his tube with a leisurely air. “You’re such a buzzkill-”

“I am the *opposite* of a buzzkill, I’m keeping the buzz alive, despite his best efforts.” Techno snapped.

“I have a feeling we’re talking about two different things.”

Techno snorted. “Get that impression?”

The cold water of the Colorado river swirled beneath them, up ahead a little ways Tommy had managed to get his tube spinning at a surprising speed.

Wilbur spoke again. “Techno, I won’t lie, I was preferring things when you didn’t care about my wellbeing. It was much more fun.”

Techno shot him a dark look.

“Shut up asshole, I always cared. Despite my best efforts.”

Wilbur tilted his head, a puzzled look gracing his features. “Why...why did you pretend not to? Why did you leave me, Tech?” His tone made Techno’s chest fill with guilt.

He took a breath. “I...was scared.”

“And you think I’m not?”

“That’s *not* what I said. I just....I’ve done this before, *we’ve* done this before.” He met Wil’s eyes with a pleading look. “I didn’t want to watch you waste away, Wil. I still don’t...you’re my brother for fuck’s sake.”

Wilbur’s face was twisted up.

“I needed you.”

“I know.” Techno breathed with a wince. “And I should’ve been there. I’m sorry Wil. But I won’t leave you again, I promise.”

Wilbur studied him with a sad smile.

“And him?” He jerked his head towards the blonde downriver.

Techno’s eyes flicked to Tommy and then back to Wil’s eyes. “What about him?”

“Are you going to leave him?”

The unspoken, *When I’m gone*, hung in the air. Technoblade went still.

“...No.” He decided.

“No?” Wilbur raised his eyebrows, apprehensive to trust any promise Techno made, with good reason.

“No.” Techno repeated, voice a little quieter. “I- I’ve got him, Wil.”

The brothers studied each other for a moment before Wilbur nodded, satisfied. Then he kicked off the canyon wall towards Tommy, who was yapping at them to stop being slow.

Techno watched the pair before following suit.

“I spy...a bird.”

Wilbur reached over and flicked Tommy in the back of the head. “That’s not how you play, dumbass.”

Tommy scowled. “Why did you make me go first?!”

Techno rolled his eyes. “Alright I’ll go.” He paused, watching the canyon pass them by as the river continued to curl through the stone. “I spy...a child.”

“How is that any different from what I did?!” Tommy protested.

Wilbur was laughing though. “Is it Tommy?” He asked. Techno nodded. The brunette cackled. “Alright! I go next!”

Tommy was looking between them, growing more and more confused. “What the hell?”

Wilbur ignored him. “I spy...something most people find incredibly annoying.”

“Tommy.” Techno guessed immediately.

“WHAT THE F-” Tommy was interrupted as Wilbur splashed him, leaving the boy spluttering.

“There are families here Tommy, stop screaming out F-bombs.”

He turned back to Techno with a badly repressed grin.

Techno continued. “I spy...” he glanced at Tommy, who was sulking on his tube. “... someone with shit handwriting.”

Wilbur's smile dropped instantly and Tommy wheezed.

“You’re a shit brother, you know that?” Wilbur said maliciously, but Techno knew nothing that ever made Tommy laugh so hard would be terrible in Wilbur’s eyes.

“*I told you* your handwriting was ass!” Tommy giggled.

“I’m bored of this game.” Wilbur decided, fishing into his pocket.

Tommy threw his hands up in the air. “I never even went!”

Wilbur tossed his disposable camera to Techno who snickered at the youngest’s moaning about the game he still didn’t understand. He snapped a picture of the three of them, and then another as Wilbur flipped Tommy’s tube.

They laughed until Tommy didn’t resurface and Techno remembered he didn’t know how to swim, chucking the camera back to Wilbur and sliding into the water after the boy.

The water was freezing and he didn't even care, too preoccupied with getting Tommy to the surface, but he couldn't *find him*, and he was panicking and Tommy must be running out of breath-

Someone above him kicked his leg and he came sputtering to the surface, head whipping around wildly. Wilbur was still on his tube, an apologetic look on his face, and beside him, holding onto both Tommy's and Techno's tube was the blonde dumpster kid himself.

He was laughing, bright and loud, life vest still securely on him. Techno breathed a sigh of relief, fear draining from his bones as he pulled himself back onto his tube.

“Alright, Tech?” Wilbur asked quietly.

“Fine.” He muttered, slumping across the tube.

Tommy had finally stopped giggling. “What’d you do that for!”

“You can’t swim.” Techno grumbled, as if the kid had forgotten again.

“I’ve got the life vest though, it would be a miracle if I managed to drown with it!”

Techno glared at him. “Maybe I just wanted to go for a swim, brat.”

Tommy laughed again. “Yeah, alright.”

They finally reached the sandy shore where the trip ended and they dragged themselves ashore, none of them escaping dry.

They dropped the tubes by the others, and got a trolley back through the desert to the start, where the van was.

Wilbur turned to him as they got off.

“...the shoes are gone.”

Techno stared at him.

“You’re joking right?”

Wilbur gestured to the empty bush where they’d stashed their shoes and socks.

Tommy busted out laughing.

The other two glared at him.

“You said they would be fine!” The blonde said, a grin splitting across his face.

“Let’s check lost and found.” Wilbur muttered, turning back to the main building.

The shoes weren’t in the lost and found. Someone just stole three pairs of shoes, apparently.

They tromped into the gift shop sheepishly.

“Oooo!” Tommy exclaimed, “they’ve got crocs!”

“We are *not* getting *matching crocs*, Tommy.” Techno said flatly.

Tommy turned to Wilbur instead. “Willllll-” He whined. “Will you get matching crocs with me?”

Techno watched gleefully as his brother’s face twisted, what would he choose? Tommy or anti-croc gang?

The brunette sighed. “...is there another kind of shoe here you like?”

Tommy pouted. “They’ve got *holes* in them Wil- look, Wil look, they’ve got *sports mode*-” He flipped a pair of red crocs into ‘sports mode’ for effect.

Wilbur crumbled. “...fine...we’ll get your stupid crocs.” He looked to Techno as the blonde pumped his fists. “You have to get them too.”

Techno blanched. “I am *not* getting.”

Techno got crocs.

The other two also got Grand Canyon hoodies and they loaded back into the van.

Tommy began flipping through the radio channels, and they were suddenly bombarded with Christmas music.

“I forgot about that.” Wilbur muttered as they cruised down the highway.

“What?” Techno asked.

“Christmas.”

Oh. It was the 23rd of December. Techno had forgotten too.

“What about it?” Tommy asked, messing with the Rubik’s cube yet again.

“It’s the day after tomorrow.” Techno explained.

“Is it really?” His brother asked.

Techno stared at Wilbur. Was he really not keeping track of the date?

“Yeah?”

“Oh.” Wilbur said. “...we should do something then, right?”

“Like what?” Tommy asked.

“I dunno...Christmas stuff.” Wilbur said flatly.

“What, like a tree?”

“We live in a van dumbass, we aren’t getting a tree.”

“A *small* tree-” The blonde suggested with a grin.

Wilbur only rolled his eyes and Techno said nothing.

It had likely escaped Tommy’s notice, but the mood had significantly soured.

...This was probably Wilbur’s last Christmas.

Techno sat back against the side of the van, the vehicle rumbling beneath him.

He wished he could go back and smack himself, stop himself from ever leaving, from throwing away the few holidays he still had left with his brother.

“You good Tech?” Wilbur asked softly from the front.

“Yeah.” He answered, voice tight. “Just hate Christmas music is all.”

Wilbur wanted to see the ocean, so they spent eight hours the next day driving to Los Angeles.

Tommy wasn’t all that sure why the beach was so important, but Wilbur said something vague about visiting the west coast as kids. Techno didn’t say much at all. He’d been quiet since the Canyon.

Maybe the drowning thing had freaked him out more than Tommy realized, or maybe Techno just hated Christmas, regardless Tommy tried to keep his obnoxiousness to a minimum.

Tommy himself was a little on edge after the mention of the holiday. Not that he had anything against it, he just never...well, he never really *celebrated* it. Hanukkah either, he never really stuck around any foster homes long enough for people to bother including him in holidays, and once he was out on the street he sure as hell didn't have the ability to celebrate, even if he wanted to.

Who wants to celebrate a holiday alone?

Not Tommy, he didn't have time for that crap.

Except now...he did. And he was nervous about it. He barely even knew basic Christmas tropes, let alone how to not ruin this thing for his-

...friends?

Is that what they were? Sure, Tommy liked to *think* of Wil like a brother, but was that real or just a joke? Was he just a kid they picked up like a lost puppy, keeping him around until they got bored of him?

That didn't feel entirely true, as he pondered the line of thought in his seat, with his favorite blanket, and Wil's fuzzy socks, the shoes they just bought him, the coke cans he set up around...

And yeah, Techno liked to joke about their Dad adopting Tommy (which is funny because he's never even *spoken* to the man) a little too often for it to really sound like a joke anymore.

This whole Christmas thing just seemed way too stressful and was making him question things he wasn't really sure he wanted to know the answer to. Hell- Wilbur and Techno didn't seem all that excited and they *wanted* to celebrate it. Tommy didn't understand why they didn't forgo the holiday altogether but here they were, in Los Angeles on Christmas eve, walking shoulder to shoulder with cups of hot chocolate, admiring the boardwalk, lit up with Christmas lights as if it wasn't sixty-five degrees out.

Kansas City would be dreary and cold this time of year. But he wasn't in Kansas City, and he wasn't ever planning on going back. Even if Wil didn't want him around anymore, he'd stay out west.

Though it was hard to believe Wil would ever not want him around as the brunette slung an arm across his shoulders, humming some stupid Christmas song, and grinning sideways at him.

This was the warmest Christmas eve Tommy had ever had, and it had nothing to do with the weather.

Given the chance, Tommy would stay at Wilbur's side forever. He hoped Techno would too.

"All right," Wilbur said, turning to the other two and spooking Tommy from his thoughts.
"Let's split up now--"

"What?" Tommy asked abruptly. Maybe he should have been paying more attention to the conversation.

"Unless you didn't feel like getting Wilbur a present, in which case, I'm completely on board--" Techno began.

"No!" Tommy said quickly. "I just don't know...how do you pick out presents?"

The air was subtly somber at that question, and Tommy tensed a bit, regretting not just choosing to wing it-

"Eh...there's not really much to it, something that reminds you of us would be enough." Wilbur shrugged.

Techno rolled his eyes and leaned over to whisper loudly to Tommy. “Don’t worry about getting something bad, Wil’s always been the worst at presents so there’s no competition-”

Wilbur smacked his brother’s arm with a lopsided grin. “Hey! I’ll have you know that I’m so fucking good at presents- *just you wait-*” He cut himself off with a glance to Tommy that the blonde didn’t miss.

Tommy gave him a perplexed look. “Wait for what?”

Wilbur ducked his head as Techno raised his eyebrows with a pointed look to the brunette.

“Tell you later...” Wil mumbled.

Wilbur gave Tommy his phone since he was more worried about the teen getting lost than himself (prick) and the trio dissolved, spreading out through the boardwalk shops.

Most of the stores were restaurants or giftshop sort of places with cheesy Los Angeles sweaters and the like being sold.

He found one place that made personalized name gifts and knew that was just *perfect*. It would be more of a gag gift so he picked up something else for Wilbur, and then tried to find something for Techno, which was much more difficult because Tommy didn’t know him as well.

After he had something picked out for the others he just wandered around until he got a text message from Techno and they regrouped.

They didn’t have any wrapping paper (not that anyone really cared) so they simply hid their gifts around the van until the next morning. The sun was set by the time they finished, and

though Tommy's feet ached and his eyelids drooped he went along with Wilbur when the brunette dragged the other two to the end of the pier.

Wilbur tried to get them on the rollercoaster but Tommy was *not* having it, and Techno agreed so they settled on the Ferris Wheel instead.

The water did look pretty amazing from up here, even at night. The reflection of the moon and the city lights glittered on the dark waves, and Tommy wasn't even cold despite the wind, nestled between the other two as he was.

"*This* is cool." Wilbur said, leaning over the edge with a reserved sort of admiration.

Techno snorted on Tommy's other side. "It's a Ferris Wheel, Wil."

"No Ferris Wheels in Kansas City." The other muttered in response.

Tommy listened without paying much attention, trying his best to stay awake because he knew Wilbur had one of his cameras on him and he would have zero hesitation taking a photo for humiliation purposes.

"Sleepy Gremlin." The brunette observed with a fond look in his eye.

Tommy bristled but there wasn't much energy behind it so he was about as intimidating as a drowsy kitten.

"We should head back." Techno said on Tommy's right, checking the time on his phone. "Especially if tomorrow is going to be busy."

Techno had a smug glint in his eye as he said it, like he was planning something. Wilbur shot him a narrowed look, but said nothing and the three of them got off the Ferris wheel and returned to the van for the night.

“Tooooommy!” Someone shook him awake with a sing-song voice. Tommy blinked up blearily, finding Wilbur grinning down at him. “It’s Christmas Toms!”

It took his brain a minute to process his words before he could respond with a simple, “Oh.”

The other two laughed at that, and Tommy pushed himself up from the nest of blankets he and Wilbur slept in, promptly catching a Dunkin’ Donuts bag with his face. “Merry Christmas.” Techno said, voice filled with the most amusement Tommy had ever heard.

Tommy glared at him, shoving a hand in the bag and pulling out a chocolate frosted doughnut, immediately stuffing his face and flipping the pink-haired man off.

The other two seemed rather chipper despite acting off the last two days.

“Plans?” Tommy asked the boy beside him, who did a rundown of their schedule for the day, a bit of a morning routine the pair had developed after the last month and a half on the road.

“Already got breakfast, now presents, then beach.” Wilbur recited. “...probably get dinner too. I dunno.”

“We’ll find something to do.” Techno added.

Tommy snorted. “*Somefin’ to do.*” He quoted around a mouthful of doughnut.

“Watch it kid, I’ll throw another pastry at you.” Techno threatened.

Tommy finished eating and then they all retrieved their gifts, tossing bags to their new owners and settling down again to ‘open’ them.

Much to Tommy’s dismay they made him go first. With a flushed face he looked at Techno’s gift for him- some little electronic. Wilbur hummed like it was a good gift but Tommy had no idea what it was.

“What is it?” He whispered loudly.

Wilbur laughed at that but Techno answered him. “It’s an MP3 player- so you can listen to music. Until we get you a phone anyways.”

Tommy’s jaw dropped, no one had ever gotten him something like this. He really did like listening to music, but it wasn’t necessary so he didn’t really do it until he met Wilbur and was introduced to his music taste.

He looked back down at the little box with newfound reverence. “Thank you, Techno.” He said genuinely.

Techno seemed happy too, a rare smile on his lips. “Sure thing, kid.”

Wilbur grew sick of not having Tommy’s attention and clapped his hands together, “Alright open mine now!”

Tommy snickered at his impatience but did as he was told anyway.

He laughed as he looked into the paper bag and found two items-

First a pair of fuzzy socks, “So I can have mine back.” Wilbur explained and Tommy scowled at with a smile creeping onto his expression.

And secondly...

Tommy held it up with a puzzled look. "Keys?"

Wil nodded. "Yup. Had them duplicated."

Tommy stared at him. "Are these-?"

The brunette was smiling broadly. "They're the van keys, obviously."

Tommy looked back down to the keys, eyes burning as he traced a finger over the grooved metal. "They're mine?"

Wilbur chuckled. "Of course they're yours. It's your van too!"

But that was a *joke*. Just one of the stupid things Tommy always said, born from the stubbornness of their initial meeting when he didn't believe there was a chance he was staying for more than five minutes, so he'd just declared it his he never actually *thought*-

Tommy grabbed at Wilbur's sweater and pulled him close, face burning as he buried it in the cloth. "Thank you." He said quietly, to avoid his voice breaking.

"Oh... Toms," the older boy wrapped his arms around the blonde and tucked him under his chin. "You're welcome."

They gave him a moment to let him stop blubbering and then it was Technoblade's turn.

He opened Tommy's gift first.

Techno peered into the bag and then slumped against the wall with relief. "Oh thank god." He muttered as Tommy laughed loudly.

"What is it...?" Wilbur asked, confused.

Techno held up a shoe box. "Regular shoes."

"What's wrong with the crocs?!" Wil asked, a smile playing on his lips as Tommy continued cackling.

"Everything." Techno said seriously with a glare at the offending clogs. "Everything is wrong with them."

"They match your hair!" The brunette protested.

Techno only shook his head. "They've got holes in them."

Wilbur threw his foot over with a grin, poking his brother with his own yellow shoes. "I *like* mine."

"Yeah, you would."

"Open Wil's!" Tommy finally interrupted the croc slander.

Techno huffed and pulled a bundle of papers out of the bag Wilbur gave him, shooting Wilbur a perplexed look.

“Paperwork for my storage container. Got everything I didn’t bring with me.” Wilbur explained.

Tommy looked between the two brothers with a puzzled expression as Techno’s face turned soft and sad.

“Oh.” Was his only response. Tommy wondered if this was the ‘Wilbur sucks at gifts’ thing that Techno mentioned. He didn’t know why Wil would give him all of his things.

“What, you don’t want your stuff anymore?” Tommy asked.

Wilbur smirked at him. “Don’t need it, do I? I’m out here for as long as I can manage.”

How long was that though? For the rest of their lives? Until they were old and gray and couldn’t sleep in the back of a van anymore? Surely he’d want his things eventually.

Tommy didn’t question it anymore. He’d come to accept that Wil was just a weird person.

Techno cleared his throat, but his voice was still scratchy when he spoke. “Alright, your turn.” He gestured to the bags in Wil’s arms.

He opened the bag Techno gave him, pulling out a wooden box and flicking it open with a shocked expression.

Inside was a collection of guitar picks.

“Are these...?”

“Mom’s? Yeah. Made Dad dig through the attic for them, took him like an hour and a half to find them.”

Oh that was actually quite a nice gift. Wilbur didn’t talk about their mother very often but Tommy could tell her death hit the family hard.

Wilbur was wearing a sappy sort of smile. “Thanks Tech.” He closed the box and placed it carefully beside his guitar case.

Tommy realized belatedly, as Wilbur opened the bag he’d given him, that the picks looked much sweeter next to his first gift to the brunette.

Wilbur looked down at the blue and yellow package, puzzled.

“They didn’t have headrest *covers* but it clips onto the metal bits.” Tommy said.

Wilbur looked up at him with a gleeful expression. “Is this what I think it is?”

Tommy shrugged, already smiling because he knew that *no it wasn’t*.

Wilbur tore open the package, looking at the name tag and busting out laughing as soon as he read the front. “*Motherfucker-*”

Tommy was laughing now too, Techno asked what it said and Wilbur turned it around so they could read it, a blue piece of cloth with the word PRICK in bright yellow lettering.

“That doesn’t say Wilby!”

“What do you mean?! That’s like- a fucking cinnamon!”

“Synonym?” Techno corrected.

Wilbur laughed as he turned and put it on his seat. “Now we have to get you one that says ‘Gremlin’.”

“*No!*”

The van dissolved into laughing.

Chapter End Notes

LIKE FOUR DAYS- THATS HOW LONG IT TOOK TO THINK OF EVERYONE'S CHRISTMAS PRESENTS, ITS SO DIFFICULT FOR NO REASON IM NEVER WRITING ANOTHER CHRISTMAS CHAPTER.

Also the scene in the Grand Canyon where Techno says “I got him, Wil.” HAS BEEN IN MY HEAD FROM THE BEGINNING.

And lovin' you was easy

Chapter Summary

It was you leaving that scarred.

Christmas part 2. I bring you ninja Techno, how long I waited for this scene.

Still fluffy! Wil does sad talk to...someone that isn't Tommy or Techno but it's not any worse than what we've been doing, alright?

Trigger warnings: knives (mentioned, it's not used violently, just be aware)

Chapter Notes

I really enjoyed writing this. I hope I didn't forget anything, it was a problem I had with HMHT and it's happened here too (RIP) I just hope I don't forget a scene that I'm attached to.

This is longer and I like the writing style.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It wasn't really warm but they went to the beach anyway.

It reminded Wil of his family, back before everything went to shit.

He thinks his mother would have liked to be here, liked to meet Tommy. She would've loved him as much as Wil did.

It was quite a fond train of thought for Tommy's screaming to background. He really didn't get on well with the seagulls.

Wilbur laughed as the blonde took off down the sand yet again, birds in hot pursuit, probably going for the kettle corn in his grasps. Tommy was furious, yelling profanities at them, and ducking with a yelp when they swooped in low.

“Kid is a menace.” Techno observed beside him, a pair of sunglasses on the bridge of his slowly flushing nose. Wilbur forgot to get sunscreen when they stopped. They were all going to get burned.

“I’d argue it’s the seagulls that are the issue.” Wilbur said, sitting back on their blanket with a smile.

Techno snorted. “You’d think anything dive bombing Tommy is an issue.”

“Fair enough.”

Techno checked his phone yet again as Tommy cussed out another bird.

“Get off your phone, *moron*. What are you looking at anyways?”

Techno looked very smug as he shut the phone off.

“Nothing you’d want to know about.” He said with a flash of teeth.

Wilbur scoffed. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Techno shrugged.

The brunette eyed his brother warily. “No, tell me. You’ve been all vague and secretive for like two days. What are you up to?”

Techno sat back with an easy smile, pointing to Tommy who was running back down the beach towards their direction again.

“Your pseudo brother is about to die at the hand of seagulls.”

“Don’t change the subject.” Wilbur snapped. “...and go save him.”

“From seagulls?”

Wilbur shrugged. “Yeah, he’ll love you.”

Techno sighed and looked between Tommy and his brother. Wilbur smirked at him, knowing exactly where this was headed.

With a huff, Techno grabbed one of Tommy’s red crocs and got up, walking out to where the blonde was swatting at the birds as they circled his head.

“Motherfuckers! Rats of the sky! Shitty pigeons!” He caught sight of Techno. “Careful Techno, you might get bird shit in your nice hair-” The blonde’s quip died in his throat as Techno pulled his arm back and chucked the croc.

The shoe flew through the air and collided with one of the seagulls with a sharp *thwap* and a squawk. The rest of the birds immediately scattered while the one hit lay dazed on the sand.

Tommy stared at Techno, open mouthed.

Behind them Wilbur was dying of laughter, to the point of wheezing and coughing.

“*What the fuck?*” Tommy screeched. “How the hell did you-?”

Techno shrugged.

“Who are you? What do you do for a living?” Tommy demanded.

Techno paused. “I’m...an accountant.”

Tommy gave him a withering look that showed he wasn’t falling for it in the slightest.

“He’s a mercenary!” Wilbur called.

There was a pause as Tommy’s mouth dropped again and he blinked at Techno. “Are you really?” He whispered.

The older boy shrugged. “Private investigator...legally speaking.”

There was a beat of silence and then the blonde was bounding over to him like a five year old who drank coffee.

“Do you shoot people? Can you throw knives? Is there a secret compartment in your motorcycle? HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO KNOCK SOMEONE OUT BY RESTRICTING THEIR AIRWAY-”

Techno put his hands on the kid’s shoulders, looking down at him with wide eyes. “...Tommy, *calm*.”

“*Can you do the thingy where you flip yourself off the ground without using your hands?*” The boy whispered.

Techno paused. "...yes, actually."

"OH MY GOD-" Tommy cackled and took off towards where Wilbur was sitting, nearly tripping over his own feet in his glee.

Techno sighed and after a moment, followed him.

They ate lunch out there, and by lunch he meant snacking on the food they kept in the back of the van.

Wilbur kept an eye on his brother, who was still acting strange and checking his phone periodically. After half an hour of that he finally brought it up again.

"Techno seriously- what's going on?"

Tommy looked up, eyes curious as he glanced between the brothers.

Techno snorted. "Maybe one of us is bothering to keep in touch with people, it *is* Christmas, Wil."

Wilbur scowled, eyes in his lap. "I know that, prick."

Techno hummed. "Don't worry, Wil, I've got it handled."

The brunette looked up sharply. “What did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything.”

Wilbur stared at him. “Where is he?”

“Who?” Tommy asked.

Techno opened his mouth to respond and was interrupted by his phone dinging. He checked it again and then swiveled his head to look around them.

“He’s right behind you actually.”

The other two whirled around to see a man coming over the sand dunes, blonde hair tucked under a striped bucket hat, bag slung over his shoulders, and a bright smile on his face.

Wilbur staggered to his feet, staring at the man.

“Dad?”

Tommy blinked at Techno. “*Dad?*”

Techno snorted but he was watching as Phil grinned broadly and Wilbur stumbled across the sand, crashing into his father’s open arms.

“Hi.” Wilbur said softly into his shoulder.

“Hi mate.” Phil chuckled, rubbing his back. “Good to see you.”

“I’m sorry.” Wil replied instantly.

Phil only shushed him though. “You’re alright Wil, you did what you had to...if you thought you were going to go Christmas without seeing me you were pretty stupid, though.”

The brunette laughed wetly, pulling away and wiping his face. “...I’m glad you came...” He mumbled.

Phil cupped his cheek, hand warm. “Me too, Wil.”

Wilbur’s eyes suddenly widened and he grabbed Phil’s arm. “You’ve got to meet Tommy!”

Phil laughed again but let himself be dragged over to their blanket and plopped down beside the other blonde.

Tommy looked at him with wide eyes, glancing between the other three.

“Hello!” Phil greeted brightly. “You’re Tommy then?”

Tommy nodded slowly.

“I’ve heard a lot about you.”

The boy’s brow furrowed. “You have?”

The others snickered at that. “Tommy, this is our dad, Phil.” Wilbur said quietly.

Tommy shot him a glare. “I figured that out, thanks.”

The older blonde sat back, watching the pair with intrigue. “How did you meet Wil?” He asked the younger boy.

The two brothers froze while Tommy smiled unabashedly, opening his mouth to answer as Wilbur clamped a hand over it and shot a glare at Techno. “You didn’t tell him *before* he showed up?” The brunette seethed.

Techno held up his hands. “Hey man, it’s your job to tell him where *your* dumpster kid came from.”

Wilbur went to respond but instead yelped, drawing his hand back from Tommy’s face. “Why did you *bite* me?”

“You were asking for it, putting your hand that close to his mouth.” Techno drawled from the opposite side of the blanket to the pair.

Tommy snapped his teeth at Wilbur for emphasis then turned back to Phil. “He got into my van.”

The eldest was puzzled by that statement. “You’ve got a van too?”

Tommy nodded. “Yes, my van.” He raised his set of car keys and hit one of the buttons, making the tail lights of the Camarvan flash.

Phil stared at the teen while Techno dissolved into quiet laughter and Wilbur watched nervously.

Phil stammered. "That's—" He looked to Wilbur. "You...what?"

The brunette smiled sheepishly and gave a nervous laugh. "He was a stowaway... *moving on-*"

Phil burst out laughing at that. "God that reminds me of where I found Techno."

Tommy's eyebrows shot into his hairline as his face lit up. Techno frowned. "I don't remember you finding me anywhere."

"Well, no." Phil turned to him with a shit eating grin. "But I *did*. I just called CPS because that's what you're supposed to do. I didn't just snatch you." He gave a pointed look to Wilbur.

Tommy leaned forward, eye dancing. "Dumpster bros?" He whispered.

Techno looked incredibly upset at that. "No- *no*, I've never touched a dumpster in my life—"

"*Trash cans*, on the other hand..." Phil said.

Techno shot him a withering glare. "Tommy- quit lookin' at me like that, I was on the streets for like *two days*, we are not the same."

Wilbur was staring at him. "I didn't know about this! I thought you were just weird!"

Phil snorted. "He was. How many kids do you know that can throw knives?"

Tommy threw his hands up, “I *knew* you could throw knives! I could *smell it*-”

He and Techno continued bickering while Phil exchanged a look with Wilbur. They’ll be fine. Everything will be okay.

Once the arguing died down Phil passed out gift-wrapped parcels, even to the wide-eyed Tommy.

“I don’t- you didn’t have to-” He began, eyes flicking around.

“It’s alright mate, I wanted to.” He nodded to the other boys. “Open them all at the same time.”

They did, tearing the paper off together, one a bit more apprehensively than the others. Wilbur burst out laughing once he saw what was inside. “How did you-?”

“I don’t really know what it means, but I kept hearing it in the videos Tech was sending me.”

Tommy was already pulling the light blue sweater over his head, eyes shining. “*Lads on tour*.” He said reverently to the older boys.

“Yeah,” Wilbur looked to his older brother, holding up his matching blue sweater with the phrase *Lads on tour*, and a drawing of a van printed onto it. “Lads on tour.” The brunette repeated softly.

Techno stared back at him, almost unbelieving, holding the cloth tightly. “...Lads on tour.”

There was a pause.

“Wait, what do you mean *Techno was sending you videos?*”

Tommy found he quite liked Wilbur and Techno’s Dad. He wasn’t very much like either of them, though he recognized some of Wilbur’s mannerisms in the way his eyes crinkled when he smiled or he laughed with his whole chest.

The four of them spent the rest of the day on the beach, terrorizing local seabird populations, being unapologetically loud, throwing sand and kicking up water at one another.

“*NO!*” The boy screamed, writhing like a ferret in Techno’s grasp as the older boy threw him over his shoulder. “*TECHNO-! DON’T YOU FUCKING DA-*” The boys protests disappeared in a plume of furious bubbles as he was tossed into the freezing cold seawater.

He came up quickly, spluttering and shaking, promptly tackling the older boy into the waves where they both appeared to be trying to drown the other.

“You’re going to get hypothermia!” Phil called from dry land. Beside him was the *click* of a disposable camera. Phil looked over to Wilbur who watched the scene with a soft gaze.

“You going to develop those?”

Wilbur looked down at the camera in his hand. “Ah, I guess. I’ve gone through most of them—or I should say we. The others take just as many pictures as I do. We’re down to the last two, not including this one, it’s only got one more photo left on it.”

Phil hummed.

“How are you feeling?”

The air became immediately more tense.

“...I’m good, Dad, really.”

Phil gave him a pointed look. “That’s not what I meant. I know you’re happy, and I’m glad, but you can’t just ignore your issues.”

“I’ve just decided not to care anymore, is that so bad?”

Phil draped an arm across his son’s back, dropping his chin on Wil’s shoulder. “Not letting it hold you down anymore is one thing, completely avoiding it is another. You should still take care of yourself...if not for you then for him.” He nodded to the drenched blonde sprinting through the water, a terrified look on his face as Techno charged after him, pink hair caked with sand that was going to take *ages* to get out.

Wilbur huffed softly.

“You haven’t told him, have you?”

It wasn’t really a question.

“I don’t want to hurt him.” Wilbur admitted quietly, fear-filled words almost lost on the wind.

Phil sighed. “I know...but you’re only going to make things worse by waiting. You can’t protect him from this, not anymore than you could protect yourself. He needs to know.”

Wilbur turned and buried his face in his father's shoulder, tears springing to his eyes. "He doesn't deserve it. He should have someone better. Someone who won't...die on him."

The blonde hushed him, rubbing circles into his back.

"Maybe...but I think you'll find that he'd rather have you now then never at all."

The wind coming off the ocean tasted of salt, whipping at their clothes, threatening to toss Phil's hat into the air. In his father's arms, Wilbur looked little more than a scared boy.

Laughter continued to echo through the open sky, innocent and carefree, originating from a boy completely unaware of what lay in his future.

"Showers tonight, I think."

Tommy shook sand from his hair, snickering at the brunette who had spoken. Wilbur looked sad, and tired, though he always looked tired these days. Maybe Tommy should insist they rest more , at least if Wilbur was going to refuse to let Techno take a turn driving.

He was probably sad because of Phil. They seemed to have had a somber sort of conversation. Tommy hoped they'd mended whatever fences broke when Wilbur decided to leave Kansas City.

"Blame the child, not me." Techno said with a grunt, pulling himself into the back of the van. "I've got sand in my *ears*." He said with a grimace.

Tommy raised his chin. "I am so powerful. I destroyed your will to live. Kneel, Blade."

Techno rolled his eyes and swatted at him, sand falling from his braid as he moved.

Wilbur hissed at the older boy. “Stop getting sand in my van!”

“You used to love sand, Wil.” Phil said, coming up and folding his arms on the driver’s door. “I used to have to restrain you around sandboxes or you would shove it in your mouth. I think someone almost called CPS on me for it.”

Tommy shrieked with laughter, throwing his head back at the older boy’s mortification. Wilbur flushed. “Fuck off, Gremlin, I watched you put a rock in your mouth once, you can’t say shit.”

Tommy bristled at that. “How else was I supposed to tell if it was a good one or not?!”

The others stared at him.

“What, a good rock?” Phil asked with a puzzled expression.

Tommy nodded sharply, hopping into the van and punching the glove compartment button. “I collect them.” He said proudly as it spilled open, sending a very large assortment of stones tumbling out onto the floor of the van.

Wilbur and Techno gaped at the sight.

“How long have you had those?!” Wilbur demanded.

Tommy shrugged, riffling through the pile. “I took this one from one of the tank exhibits in Oklahoma City.” He said holding up a rather large, sandy colored rock.

The brunette was still staring at him. “This whole time? You’ve been *collecting rocks* this entire trip and I never noticed?”

The blonde snickered, looking through the rocks and pulling out a strangely dark brown, jagged rock. “This one reminds me of you.” He said, grabbing Wilbur’s hand and putting the rock in his palm.

The brunette melted, holding up the stone and examining it with teary eyes, though Tommy was too busy looking through his rocks to notice his reaction, which might’ve been a good thing because he probably would’ve just whacked the boy.

“And this one is like Techno!” He shoved a salmon-colored rock with small dark bits embedded in the surface into the older boy’s hand. Techno blinked in surprise.

Phil chuckled softly, rapping a knuckle on the inside of the door. “Alright, have fun with your rocks Tommy-”

“I call this one *Dwayne The.*”

“Wil, I’m going to stay out here on the west coast if you need me. I want you to *call.*” He gave the brunette a stern look, and the boy nodded sheepishly.

Phil ruffled his son’s hair. “See you around boys, nice meeting you Tommy!” He waved and headed to his own car as the three called out a chorus of goodbyes and Merry Christmases.

“Why isn’t he coming with us?” Tommy asked as soon as he was gone.

Wilbur started the van and glanced to him with a shrug. “He said four people was too many to sleep in this van...and something about how this trip was important and he wanted us to have it, or something, I dunno.”

Tommy nodded though it didn't clear up his confusion.

"Showers." Techno reminded gruffly from the back as the started down the road.

Wilbur laughed. "Yes, yes. We'll stop somewhere."

Tommy groaned. "You take forever, Wil."

"He's got a six step hair routine." Techno said from the back.

The blonde squawked. "The hell? Techno's the one with the long hair, why are you spending so much time?!"

"Don't be jealous, just because my hair looks better than yours."

Tommy huffed. "It does *not*."

"What's your hair routine, Tommy?" Techno asked.

Tommy wrinkled his nose. "...I wash it. Then I dry it."

The van immediately erupted into protest.

"-don't even *condition*?"

“-past your ears, you really should-”

“-I’ve got like four products, and any single one would make your brain implode-”

“-ust try it?”

“HEY!” Tommy snapped, eyes wide at the reaction his words garnered. “Let’s not be hasty, gentlemen!”

Wilbur shook his head, a grin five miles wide. “Nah, that’s it. You’re letting me style your hair.”

“Absolutely not. I do not want to spend eight years in a planet fitness bathroom or wherever the hell we go.”

His refusal was dismissed with a wave. “I’ll just do it outside in the van.”

“No!” Tommy protested, tips of his ears turning red.

Wilbur was nodding though, completely set on it. Techno chuckled from the back. “There’s no escaping, Tommy, just accept your fate.”

That was in fact, a true statement.

Tommy grumbled, towel wrapped around his shoulder, water dripping from his wet hair as Wilbur pulled out way too many bottles from his hair care bag.

“When’s the last time you brushed that nest out?” Techno asked, snacking on a bag of chips from the back as he watched, sand now absent from his pink strands.

Tommy shrugged. “I dunno.”

Wilbur froze. “Okay, well *that’s* over with, as of now.”

Tommy muttered something under his breath about bitches and weak men, but interrupted himself with a strangled yelp as his shoulders were grabbed and pulled back until his head rested on Wil’s lap, the older boy sitting cross-legged with a towel draped over him.

Tommy’s brow furrowed as he glared up at Wilbur’s face above him, smirking down at the boy.

“Ayup.”

“Fuck off.”

Wilbur only hummed happily though and popped the cap of one of his hair products, squeezing out a decent amount of the stuff. “This is conditioner.” He explained as he began to distribute through the ends of Tommy’s hair. “It’ll help with the detangling.”

“The what?”

“Getting knots out.” Wil explained, then as an afterthought. “Dumbass.”

Tommy scowled at him, fidgeting with the sleeves of the sweater Phil had gifted him. Getting presents was still a strange concept, but he quite liked it.

“Alright, I’m going to start brushing it out,” Wilbur held up a wide-toothed comb so Tommy could see it. “Don’t whine.”

“Why would-” Tommy began and then hissed in pain as his hair was tugged by the combing.

“Gentler, Wil.” Techno added from outside Tommy’s line of sight. “If he’s not used to it, it’ll hurt.”

The brunette listened and after a few relatively painless minutes they moved onto the next step.

Apparently Tommy was supposed to be paying attention, but really, what did Wil *expect* to happen when he was laying there with someone massaging hair products into his scalp? He was all but asleep when Techno spoke.

“Phil said you guys look adorable.”

Tommy’s eyes snapped open and he nearly sat up, only being stopped by Wilbur holding his shoulders. “What did you send him?” The teen demanded.

Techno snickered and turned his phone screen so Tommy could see it.

Tommy hated it. He looked completely non-threatening and at peace in the photo, eyes closed with content expression, street lamp light falling across his face. Wilbur’s hands were blurred, moving in Tommy’s hair as he smiled softly down at the boy in his lap.

“You bitch!” He cried, completely betrayed.

“Calm down.” Wilbur ordered, shoving him back to the floor. “And send that to me.” He added to Techno, earning a withering glare from Tommy.

Wilbur only gave him a mischievous smile and continued doing his hair.

It probably only took twenty minutes, and would have gone quicker if Tommy was more cooperative. His hair air dried as they made their way outside of Los Angeles, into more rural areas.

“Aw, it’s so wavy!” Wilbur cooed.

Tommy would’ve smacked him if Techno didn’t catch him by the wrist.

“No assaulting the driver. Especially with your feet on the dashboard, you’ll break both of your legs if the airbags go off.” Techno lectured.

Tommy mocked him and ripped his hand from the man’s grasp. “I will never break anything! My bones are far too strong.”

Techno rolled his eyes and laid back on the mattress. Tommy scowled at him.

“Why does *he* get to sit in the back?”

“Children wear seatbelts in this household.” Wilbur declared.

“I will murder you. In your sleep. You will die a painful death at my hand.” Tommy threatened.

Wilbur’s eyes flickered. “Not at your hand.”

“Is that a challenge?”

The man laughed as they pulled off the side of the road, into the middle of a sparse, dry grassland.

“C’mon, Gremlin, it’s been a while.” Wilbur said as he got out, Techno blinking at them confused.

The stars were out now, and Tommy wasted no time crawling up the front of the van onto the roof. “It’s warmer than it usually is!” He called down.

“Still bring the blanket. Don’t need the child catching a cold. Coming Tech?” Wilbur turned to his brother.

Techno watched Tommy sit down on the roof of the van with a puzzled look. “I guess?”

“Stargazing. Little tradition.”

The older brother hummed and followed Wil up beside Tommy. The trio sat on the roof, a little more spread out than the last few times Tommy and Wil did this. The blonde was laying on his back, watching the cosmos with reverence, as the wind ruffled his freshly styled hair.

“Hey Tech,” Wilbur said, breaking the silence. “Got your pocket knife on you?”

Techno’s eyes narrowed immediately. “Why?”

His brother made grabby hands for it and Techno pulled it from his pocket with a sigh.

Wilbur flipped the blade open immediately, leaning over the surface of the roof and pressing the point into the paint. There was a scratching noise and after a few moments he leaned back, grinning proudly at his name etched into the metal.

Techno snorted and Wilbur held the handle of the knife out to him, eyes glittering. There was a pause, and his brother took the knife, hesitating only a moment before scratching his own name.

Wilbur Soot

Technoblade Watson

Tommy rested his head on his hands, eyeing the words, it took him a moment to read Wilbur's and then, "You've got different last names?"

They nodded. "I took my mother's, Techno took dad's." Wilbur explained.

Tommy hummed, and after a pause he eyed the knife in Techno's hands.

"I don't know, Will...I don't think I trust him with anything sharper than a crayon." Techno drawled.

The blonde scowled as Wilbur laughed. "Don't be a bitch!" Tommy snapped. Wilbur took the blade from Techno and offered the handle to Tommy.

With his tongue sticking out in concentration and a mischievous glint in his eye Tommy carved his first name, just beside where he was sitting. He paused when the 'Y' was finished, debating. He didn't really want to put his last name, the other two didn't even know what it was and Tommy almost preferred it that way. He liked to think he left Tommy Innit back in Kansas city.

“Put ‘Soot’.”

Tommy stared up, open mouthed at the brunette who’d been watching him think. “What...?”

Wilbur’s mouth twitched like he was trying not to smile. “I said write ‘Soot’.” The older boy repeated.

“...Why?”

The other boys both snickered. “Well are you going to put your own last name?” Wilbur asked.

Tommy’s nose wrinkled. “No. I don’t need it. It’s too much work, and my name is so massive and impressive on its own I don’t *need* to put it.”

Wil scoffed, tossing a look to Techno who simply shrugged.

“I’m serious, put ‘Soot’. ‘Tommy Soot’.”

Blue eyes stared up at him, wide and uncomprehending. “I- but that’s your name.” His voice was nearly a whisper, almost lost on the wind.

“My name is not Tommy Soot.”

Wil was rewarded with a hard smack to his arm, but he only laughed, while Tommy’s eyes turned glossy as he stared down at the unfinished name before him. Maybe he was putting too much weight on this action, maybe he thought it meant more than it really was. But the paint would be scratched forever. He couldn’t go back once he wrote it.

“I- you’re not serious.”

“I am.”

“*Stop it.*” Tommy glared at him. “You don’t get it. You can’t throw stuff like that around like the other things you say. This isn’t just you saying I’m ‘perfect’, or ‘yours’, or calling me a brother as a joke. So quit it.”

Wilbur leaned down slowly, now on the blonde’s eye level. “I’m not joking.” Tommy pulled away, eyes brimming with tears. “You *are* perfect, you *are* mine- *my brother*. So write the damn name Tommy, because I’m not changing my mind if you won’t...him either.” He kicked the oldest who gave an exaggerated eye roll.

“...Yeah, whatever. We’re stuck with you...forever.” A smile played in his eyes, hinting to his honesty, something Tommy might have once not picked up on.

Tears fell as the blue eyes dropped back down to the roof of the van.

There was a scraping noise, like nails on a chalkboard, or silver on porcelain, or a knife on a van. It sounded like music to them though. When it stopped, the lines were drawn, promises made. Etched into metal, like an oath, like blood. The unequivocal answer to a question they’d been asking silently for so long.

Tommy Soot

Tommy laughed, a scratchy thing, raw with emotion, high strung with elation. And his brothers laughed too, ruffling his hair, pressing a kiss to his forehead, dragging him across the roof to hold him close as he made weak protests all the while.

We’re like brothers, The boy had said to himself, all those weeks ago, with no idea just how right he was.

Chapter End Notes

!! They are brothers!

Also Wilbur really is working on telling him, he's just being a pussy about it...however now that they're officially calling Tommy family he can't really avoid the topic much longer.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU MOTHERFUCKERS THOUGHT I WOULD JUST LET WILBUR COMPLETELY IGNORE PHIL ON THE LAST CHRISTMAS OF HIS LIFE.

... 4/4 sbi content will return.

I think this time I'm dying

Chapter Summary

He's not melodramatic.

Okay so remember how sweet last chapter was? Hold onto that.

If you were here for the fluff it's time to take your leave. The entire chapter is from Wilbur's point of view, so you'll see how he's doing, and it's not great.

No one is dead yet

Trigger warnings: terminal illness, pain medication, mentions of addiction, depictions of vomiting.

I will put a star (*) before and after the most graphic scene, it's not terrible but I'm being overly cautious on purpose.

Chapter Notes

Hi 😊 uhhh let's get ready to rumble? If you are unhealthily attached to the emotional state of these characters (lmao me) you might get a wee bit sad with this one, HOWEVER it's prefaced by perhaps one of the funniest conversations in the entire fic so there's that.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

For a while, he pretended everything was okay. He knew Techno hated it, that he wished Wilbur would just rip off the bandaid. But he waited a day. And then another. Then a week had passed. Then a month.

Before he knew it, spring had come, and they were passing a sign on the highway that said *Welcome to Washington* on it, the guilt in his chest settling like a stone.

But Tommy was *so* happy. How could Wilbur take that away from him?

There was a clatter as the Rubik's cube hit the dashboard and fell to the floor.

"The child's throwing a tantrum...again." Techno observed without even lifting his eyes from the page of his book. Wilbur wasn't sure how he didn't get carsick.

"It's stupid!" Tommy protested.

Wilbur took his eyes off the road momentarily to glance at the boy. He was indeed looking incredibly disgruntled over the still unsolved Rubik's cube. Honestly the fact that he had spent months messing with it and still had yet to finish it was almost more impressive than Techno's current record of forty-seven seconds.

"Tommy, it's not that difficult—" Techno began.

"Oh, leave him alone!" Wilbur defended, though he was sure the smile on his face would betray his own opinion.

"No! Kid look, you match each color with a side it's simple once you get the hang of it—"

"There's more sides than there are colors!"

Techno blinked at him with a bewildered expression. "Can you count?"

"YES! There are six sides, but there aren't six colors!"

There was a pause as Tommy continued to fume and the other two processed what he had just said.

"Wait a minute..." Wilbur muttered as he pulled off the side of the road.

“What?” Tommy snapped.

Techno was staring at him. “There’s no fucking way.”

Wilbur reached over and picked up the puzzle, holding it up. “How many colors do you see here?”

Tommy scowled. “Four... no- five. These two are close but they’re different...I think.”

The other boys stared at him. “Tommy there are *six*.” Wilbur said.

The blonde snatched the cube out of his hand, grumbling. “There’s not!”

Wilbur buried his head in his hands, groaning loudly.

“I can’t believe we didn’t notice sooner.” Techno muttered.

“Notice what?” Tommy asked as Wilbur’s groan turned to laughing.

“He’s fucking colorblind.” The brunette whispered.

“I. AM. *NOT*.” Tommy denied instantly.

Techno leaned forward and pointed to a square on the Rubik’s cube. “What color is this?”

“Red, you absolute fucking moron.”

Wilbur snickered and Techno pointed to another color. “And this one?”

“Blue.”

“Okay...” He’d been right so far. “This one.” Techno pointed to a different color.

“Blue.”

Techno and Wilbur exchanged a look.

“That’s green.” Techno said flatly.

Tommy blinked, looking down at the cube again. “Oh. Yeah. I guess it is...it looks less blue than blue.”

“It’s not supposed to look like blue at all.” Wilbur said.

The teen’s brow furrowed. “It’s not?”

His brothers shook their heads.

Tommy deflated a bit. “Oh...”

“Aw, Tommy!” Wil cried, looking apologetic.

Tommy scowled as the tips of his ears turned red. "Shut up."

"Here—" Wilbur reached over the glove compartment.

"Don't!" Techno warned, but it was too late. Wil had already opened it and sent a pile of rocks clattering to the floor. Tommy snorted.

The brunette sighed but got the blue paint marker he had been looking for, handing it to Techno.

Techno hummed and grabbed the cube out of Tommy's hands as they pulled back onto the highway.

"Hey!" The blonde snapped.

"Shut up, I'm helpin' you." The oldest muttered as he solved the cube.

"Show off." Tommy grumbled.

Once it was finished Techno popped the cap off of the paint marker and began putting dots on each square. Tommy watched with wide eyes.

"W-What are you doing?" He asked.

"Do you want to be able to use this or not?" Techno shot back in response.

It was quiet until Techno finished, blowing the marks on the cube dry, rescrabbling it, then holding it out to Tommy. Each color now had a different number of dots on it, like on dice.

“...but it’s yours.”

Techno only shrugged. “It’s not like I can’t use it anymore, now you can though.”

Tommy took it back hesitantly.

They sat in comfortable silence again, with only the occasional sound of Techno turning a page in his book or Tommy rotating one of the cube rows.

After a few minutes Tommy sheepishly held out the cube, completely solved now, and the van erupted into laughter.

Wilby wuz here

Tommy snatched the paint marker from his hand just as he finished the last letter, making the ‘e’ end a bit wonky.

“Oi! I was using that!” Wilbur rolled over to glare at the boy.

Tommy smirked at him. “If anyone is writing on this van, it’s going to be someone with legible handwriting.”

Wilbur huffed, dropping his head back onto his pillow and staring at the blue words as they dried, just a few inches from where he and Tommy’s heads laid every night.

“The only thing worse than letting Wilbur draw on the walls, is letting *you*.” Techno added from his own corner.

Tommy sent him a withering glare. “Fuck off! You get your stupid magnets over there, we can put what we want over here, in the *cool* corner.”

Techno snorted and affectionately patted his magnet collection, stuck to the metal wall of the van beside where he slept. He had over a dozen now, some from various attractions, others just different states. One was just a minecraft pig, for some reason.

Wilbur nudged the blonde beside him. “Alright then, what are you putting.”

Tommy hummed thoughtfully. “Something cooler than *Wilby was here*... maybe-”

“Subscribe to Technoblade.”

“You don’t even *have* a YouTube.” The blonde snapped immediately.

The eldest snickered as Wilbur rolled his eyes. “Stop distracting him or this will take four years.” He argued.

Tommy scowled at him, but went back to brainstorming. Wilbur grew bored of waiting for him and let his eyes slip close with a sigh. He could go for a nap.

“Wil, you might want to supervise his additions.”

His eyes snapped open but Tommy had already finished writing and was *rolling* with laughter.

Wilbur sputtered at the two words scribbled hastily underneath his own note.

WIFEHAVER

POGCHAMP

“The fuck is this?!” He yelled at the blonde.

Techno snorted. “Bruh, this thing’s retail value just decreased by like, 80%.”

Tommy was all but howling with laughter and Wilbur decided he’d had enough of being a big brother, and it was time to smother the boy with a pillow.

Tommy immediately shrieked, his arm darting out with a flash of blue. Wilbur jumped back but it was too late, a long blue mark was painted across his arm.

“You little *shit*-” He seethed, jumping towards the blonde like he was about to throttle him.

Techno ended up having to (having is a strong word, the fucker *wanted* to) interject, and ultimately none of the trio made it out of the scuffle without blue smears across their clothes and skin.

They lay winded on the floor of the van, Tommy’s cackling laughter breaking the monotony occasionally. Wilbur’s head tipped to the side and he spotted another blue mark on the wall of the van, this time towards the center, under one of the windows. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a handprint, the fingers too long to be Techno’s but too lanky to be Wilbur’s.

His head snapped back towards Tommy. “You fucker! You got a handprint on my wall!”

Tommy grinned smugly at him. “My wall, bitch.”

Wilbur huffed angrily but reached over and pressed his own blue hand to the wall beside the other print.

“Oi! That’s my wall, bitch!”

They snapped at each other for a few minutes, and wouldn’t notice Techno adding his own hand to the wall until two days later, when it sparked another argument mid-drive that nearly ended with another paint fight in the middle of the highway.

“Okay, but *why?*”

Wilbur dumped a pile of firewood in the blonde’s arms, despite his whining.

“Camping is fun, Tommy.” He grinned at the boy.

Tommy huffed, stirring the strands of hair that fell across his eyebrows. “Sleeping outside is not fun, you twat.”

“We’re still sleeping in the van.” Techno snorted as he walked past the pair, arms laden with more supplies.

“But in the *woods.*”

Wil snickered and shoved the boy towards the van, who grumbled as he carried the firewood back and dumped it inside.

The brunette turned to pick up a folding chair, nearly dropping it with a sharp gasp of pain. Techno was at his side in a moment, movements careful and eyes even more so. Wilbur smacked his arm away immediately, swallowing the pain with a shaky breath as he glanced back over his shoulder at the blonde who was stacking wood in the van, the moment passing unnoticed by him.

Wilbur took another breath, looking at his older brother who watched him with an unblinking gaze.

“I’ll get them.” Techno said simply, quietly.

Wilbur’s arm shot out to catch him as he turned back towards the van. “I don’t- I don’t want-” He paused, swallowing thickly. He wasn’t sure. What didn’t he want?

I don’t want him to see, I don’t want the drugs, I don’t want to be addicted, I don’t want to die.

His mouth was dry and the words never passed his lips.

Techno took a slow breath. “I know. But I don’t want you in pain.” And he marched away without another word.

Tommy never asked about Wil’s prescriptions, even after all these months. Wilbur almost wished he would. He might not have the heart to lie to him if he did.

The pain was worse. The pills helped, of course they did. But it scared him. He took them more frequently than he would like, and he feared that it dulled his senses as much as his pain.

He wanted to be awake while he still could. The pain meds didn’t make it any easier.

Tommy grinned broadly as they watched waves crash against cliffs and rocky outcrops. The pacific was dark and cold looking, completely unaffected by the warming weather. Mist and fog lay thick over the landscape, but even with most of their surroundings shrouded it was still beautiful. This rocky shore was nothing like the beaches in California that Wilbur liked so much, but he could appreciate it well enough.

“It’s damp!” Tommy yelled to him over the rush of ocean water, sea spray dissipating into air.

Wilbur laughed. “It is!” He agreed.

“Why are we camping here?”

Wilbur and Techno exchanged a look, the latter rolling his eyes. Tommy might have been clearly enjoying the rainy forests of the Pacific Northwest but the spiteful little fucker wasn’t any closer to admitting it.

“It’s nice.” He answered simply.

Tommy snorted but his eyes danced and he shrieked with laughter when the next wave sent a light shower of salty water across the trio.

Wilbur snickered and flicked water at him and the next moment they were scuffling on the slick stones, damp hair all askew and faces alight with laughter.

Tommy was the type to rough house, and Techno did his best to be the focal point of such play fights, but it wasn’t much use when Wilbur was just as apt to goad the youngest into the lighthearted altercations.

Wilbur ignored the sharp stabs of pain in his side with every twist and turn, laughing instead of crying out. It was worth it, he thought, as he wrapped his arms around his little brother, restraining his flailing limbs and ignoring the words on his sharp tongue.

Moments like this made the lie worth it.

Techno was glaring at him sharply as Tommy finally went limp, all tangled arms and blonde hair sticking up.

Wilbur only grinned at him.

“It’s too *wet* to light a fire.” Tommy complained after twenty minutes of Techno trying and failing to light their tinder. “If the fucking *Blade* can’t light it, no one can.”

Wilbur snorted and pulled out his lighter, it was older, not the disposable kind but a dark metal, dented and dull, refilled a thousand times. He offered it to Techno.

You’d think he was passing the man DNR papers from the way he glared at it. Wilbur laughed at his expression. “What? Do you want to light that damn fire or not?”

Technoblade scowled, eyes flicking from the lighter to his face. “You still smokin’? Seriously?”

The brunette snorted and tossed the lighter to him since he wouldn’t take it. “No. I’m not.” *Not that it matters anyway.*

Tommy had quite literally smacked his last cigarette onto the ground and crushed the thing, mere hours after they first met, in the laundromat parking lot. Said something along the lines of,

I'm not fucking smellin' that shit for however long we're doing this.

He was oddly defensive about it, in a way that led Wilbur to believe he'd had negative experiences with people that smoked.

So he hadn't touched another cigarette since. Not that he was happy about it, seriously it wasn't going to kill him any faster than the fucking cancer, least he could have was the nicotine buzz.

Techno huffed as he flicked open the metal cap with a *click*. "Somehow I don't believe you." He flicked it on, and it lit, of course it did. Wilbur always kept it filled with lighter fluid, even if he hadn't needed the damn thing in months.

Something about the familiarity of it, the routine of refilling it. Clinking metal, the smell of the fuel, that first gratifying spark and flame. He could forget everything that had changed in the last few years. It would be just another day, college classes, cigarettes, phone calls from his mother, visits with Techno.

How distant it all seemed, way out here. He missed his mother. But he didn't miss anything else. He'd been dying just as much then as he was now, he just didn't know it. The only difference was what he spent his dwindling time doing.

And he much preferred it here.

After a few moments of direct flame the kindling smoked, and after several minutes they had a fire, smoky as it was from the damp wood.

Tommy stretched out towards the warmth, feet brushing against the stones of the fire pit. Around them the forest was alive, anything but silent.

“Smacked that shit right out of his hand.” The blonde mumbled.

Techno blinked at him. “What?”

“The smokes. Fuck that shit man, don’t need to watch him die to cancer sticks.”

The silence was deafening. Wilbur’s heart sank to the forest floor, grown cold and empty with bitter guilt.

“Yeah,” Techno agreed, voice tight. “That’s what I always told him.”

Conversation lulled as the fire crackled, shooting sparks into the sky.

“We *can* have a fire here right?” Tommy asked.

The older two exchanged a look.

“Yeah, of course.” “For sure.”

Tommy looked between them. “No...that’s what you looked like when I asked if our shoes were going to get stolen at the Pit.”

“Stop calling the Grand Canyon *the Pit.*” Techno muttered.

Wilbur snickered. He wondered if the other two would remember which bush that was, in the future. It would be a shame if they didn’t. Or if they simply chose not to humor him.

“We wouldn’t lie about illegal campfires, Tommy.” He assured with no lack of mischief in his eyes.

“Why’d you call it illegal?”

Wilbur stood from his folding chairs with a clap of his hands and a devilish grin. “I’ll get out dinner stuff.” He said, pointedly ignoring Tommy.

They roasted hot dogs over the fire, which wasn’t the best idea because Tommy was apparently just as much of a pyromaniac as Wilbur was, poking at the logs every time the other two were turned around.

“You throw one more empty chip bag into that and I’m locking you in the van for the rest of the night.” Techno threatened as Tommy hid a grin behind the collar of his hoodie.

The other two continued to bicker, a small joy, ringing out through the dark forest. Wilbur watched them for as long as he could manage, firelight casting a warm glow on his brothers grinning faces. He’d take a picture, if the cameras weren’t used up.

Techno looked to him as soon as he stood up. “What’s up?” He asked, for a goddamn mercenary the man was shit at acting casual.

Wilbur snorted. “Can’t a man piss without being questioned?”

Tommy snickered as the brunette disappeared into the trees beyond the van, Techno’s eyes trailing after him with a narrowed gaze.

*

Wilbur wasn’t actually going to piss, his kidneys weren’t very efficient these days anyway. He just didn’t want to ruin the mood when he couldn’t keep his dinner down.

He should have known the over-processed meat that their hotdogs were made from would be too much for him. He was reminded how painfully limited his body was with dripping lips and the sour taste of acid lining his mouth and nose. Fuck, that was the last time he ate hotdogs in this life.

Jagged tree bark pressed into his palms as he held himself up, another heave wracking him, making his limbs shake and eyes water.

There was a hand on his shoulder, a low, gravelly voice murmuring consolation. Techno. A calloused hand rubbed his back until the episode passed and his body was his own once more.

He staggered away, needing distance from the smell, and nearly stumbled on his unsteady feet. But Techno was there, infallible and constant. His brother eased him to the forest floor, pressing a water bottle and bundle of napkins to Wilbur's palms.

*

He sat back with a shaky sigh, the wind feeling like ice on his face. He hadn't even noticed when the tears began. "I'm sorry." He whispered, voice breaking.

Techno shook his head. "Don't. It's not...you're alright, Wil."

Wilbur's mouth trembled as he pressed it into a thin smile. He wasn't alright. And they both knew it.

He wiped his face off with a napkin and rinsed his mouth out with water. Techno was still and silent. You'd think he was the dead man, not Wilbur.

"We should go back down south. The climate will be easier for you."

Wilbur shook his pounding head. "No- Tommy likes it here. *I* like it here. Everything is fine."

His brother looked about to cry, and Wil had only ever seen him cry once before. When they watched their mother die in that hospital, back in Kansas City.

“It’s not, Wil.” Techno said quietly, like a secret, a thing he refused to admit before. Because Wil could look him in the eye and laugh about how he was dying but Techno was never able to do the same.

Wilbur nodded, eyes dropping to the ground between his knees, a manic laughter bubbling in his throat.

“It’s not.” He agreed.

For a moment they were quiet, and the forest chirred and hummed around them, buzzing with a life that Wilbur had been chasing for the last two and a half years.

“You have to do it. Now. Before you can’t.”

Wilbur turned his head until his chin dug into his own shoulder, teeth sinking into the flesh of his lower lip, struggling to hold himself together. He’d never be able to have a conversation if he started sobbing.

“I don’t want to.” Whether it was an admission or a plea he couldn’t say. “I want to stay like this. Forever.”

He could see Techno’s head tilt out of the corner of his eye, something like sympathy in the way he reached for Wilbur.

“I know. Me too.” He admitted quietly, a warm, undying hand on the back of Wilbur’s head. “You held on as long as you could Wil...but it’s time to wake up now. You *have* to tell him.”

Cold air flooded his lungs, he hadn't even realized he'd been holding his breath. Tears raced unapologetically down his face, almost invisible in the low light.

He nodded, just barely.

"Tell me what?"

And Wilbur shattered, heart going still.

Techno stood, holding an arm out to the boy. "C'mere Tommy."

"No." Wilbur rasped. "Don't want him to see... W- we'll go to the Camarvan."

Techno sighed but crouched down to help him up, steady beside Wil's own shaking form. Tommy watched with an unreadable expression. "What's going on?" He asked, loud as alway, demanding answers.

But when Wilbur stretched an arm towards him, the blonde slipped under it, slotting in like a missing puzzle piece.

"... 'S fine." Wilbur lied. Lie, lie, lie, and lie again. What's one more?

"Yeah, fuckin' looks like." The teen snapped back as the trio went back to the van.

"I don't like hotdogs anymore." Wilbur murmured. Techno snorted on his other side, reaching out and yanking the back doors open.

The brunette slumped onto the tailgate, brow cold and beaded with perspiration.

“Wil?” The youngest asked timidly.

Wilbur turned his gaze up to him, smiling a smile that couldn’t reach his eyes. “I’m sorry.” The older boy said, nearly whispering.

Tommy stared at him with wide blue eyes. “You’re scaring me, Wil.” The blonde said, voice shaking.

Wilbur sighed and held out his arms, and Tommy fell into them unquestioning. They stayed like that for a moment, silent, hearts pounding in twin fear.

“Are you...are you leaving me?”

Wilbur pressed his tear-brimmed eyes into the younger boy’s shoulder, arms tightening around him. They’d been brothers for months and Tommy still expected them to disappear on him at the drop of a dime.

The worst part is that he *is* leaving him.

“I’d never leave you, not by choice.” Wilbur swore, rocking with the boy in his arms, more for his own comfort than Tommy’s at this point.

Damp warmth soaked his shoulder, and it broke his heart. “...You don’t have a choice...” Tommy guessed.

“I-” His head was pounding in beat with his heart, guilt and fear swirling in his still uneasy stomach. He couldn’t do this. He *couldn’t*. He was a coward.

“It’s okay, Wil,” Techno rumbled nearby. “It’s alright, just tell him. He has to hear it from you.”

“Wil?” Tommy’s voice tilted with panic, just beside Wilbur’s ear.

How did he get here? He can barely remember that first night. Or maybe he could. Cigarette smoke and snow. Sneaking out the front door, a note, blonde hair, blue eyes, so much excitement, so much hope. It took his breath away, it made him rethink what he was looking for, what he was living for. Not just to experience but to live, to remember and be remembered. To live, and then, when all was said and done, to die.

“I’m dying.” And the words slipped from his lips like icemelt from a glacier. Landing a devastating blow, turning worlds upside down.

Selfishly, relief settled in his bones, a deep exhaustion from keeping the act up for so long lifting from his too-tired body. He was free from the lie, but at what cost?

The boy slipped from his grasp, blue eyes meeting brown, desperately searching for a flicker of laughter, the tug of a smile, a lie.

But he wasn’t lying. Anymore.

And when Tommy couldn’t find what he was looking for, his face crumbled into something darker.

“Don’t say that.” He snarled. “It’s not fucking funny.”

And Wilbur could only gaze sadly at him.

“Don’t-” Tommy whipped his head to Techno. “Tell him to knock it off.” He begged.

He only got a warm hand on his shoulder though, and he pulled away from it, eyes flashing with desperation.

“I said stop it!” He yelled, voice echoing into the dark trees.

Wilbur reached a hand out for him. “Come here Tommy.” He ordered softly.

The blonde shook his head, eyes shining. “You’re *lying*. I would’ve known!” His shoulders shook as he looked between his two brothers with anguish written on his young features. “I would’ve *known!*” His voice was hoarse, high with fear, and breaking more with each syllable.

“I’m so sorry, Toms.” Wilbur said helplessly.

Tommy looked to Techno, tears falling. “How long since...?”

Techno was stoic. “A little more than two and half years.”

Tommy went still. “Two...?” He trailed off. Blue eyes landed on Wilbur again. “This entire time?”

Salt dripped onto Wilbur’s lap as he nodded.

“You’ve been dying this entire time? And I never-” His voice broke and words turned to terrible, gut wrenching sobs that settled in Wilbur’s ears, never to be forgotten.

The next moment he found Tommy crashing into his chest, squeezing him as if he held Wilbur tight enough he would never have to let him go.

And Wil held him just as tight, cradling his neck as sobs wracked him.

When he held his other hand out their other brother didn't hesitate to wrap his immovable arms around the pair, wishing desperately he could shield them from the cards of fate.

Around them the forest was as silent as death.

Chapter End Notes

IM SORRY IF YOURE CRYING BUT I NEED TO TELL YOU I POSTED A PICTURE OF WHAT THE RUBIK'S CUBE LOOKS LIKE TO TOMMY ON MY TWITTER. The colorblindness was my sister's idea so everyone thank her. I've been planning that scene for ages now and I finally got to write it.

With that being said...this fic is almost at its end. The next chapter will probably be the last one unless the word count gets away from me (likely tbh). There will be a sequel.

The poll to vote on the name for the series is live on my Twitter until 9:30am EST 8/11/21. Name options are as follows:

Now this interstate is paved with memories
All roads lead to home
Lads on tour

Oh, I can't seem to let myself leave you

Chapter Summary

But I can't breathe anymore
Oh, I can't seem to not need to need you
And I can't breathe anymore

Hello friends, the final chapter. The epilogue will be posted at the same time.

I'm going to rapid fire now, Yes somebody dies this chapter, no it's not a satisfying ending, yes you will (hopefully?) cry, yes I plan on making it hurt, no you cannot sue me for emotional damages, yes there will be a sequel, no I am emotionally stable after writing this.

Trigger warnings: Major character death, terminal illness, cancer and its symptoms, grief.

Chapter Notes

If you haven't listened to "Repeat until death" by novo amor go do that, it's what this chapter was named after.

If you didn't notice I went and renamed a few chapters so they're all named with lyrics from songs on the playlist. This theme will probably continue in the sequel.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy awoke with a start.

"You woke him up." Wilbur grumbled, chest rumbling under Tommy's ear.

There was another thump, and he pushed himself up, blinking around the van in the morning light.

He met Techno's eyes as the older boy loaded something else into the back of the van.

"What's going on?" He croaked, voice still a wreck.

Techno paused to study him for a moment, meeting Wilbur's eyes over Tommy's head and looking back to the blonde. "Go back to sleep. We're just heading out, that's all."

Tommy moved to get up and found Wilbur's arm wrapping around him and pulling him back into the nest of pillows again. "Wha..?" He drowsily frowned at the brunette.

"It's alright, we'll stay back here. Just go back to sleep."

Tommy stared at him. "Don't...don't you have to drive?"

Wilbur's expression was carefully controlled. "Techno is gonna drive for a bit. He's more of a morning person."

But Wilbur always drove. Techno never even asked once, it was an unspoken rule. Wil's van. He drives.

Tommy studied him through narrowed eyes, taking in the dark bags, dull hair, and ever so slightly sunken face. *God, he'd been so blind, it was obvious now.*

"...I can stay back here?"

Wilbur had been very clear in the past. They didn't go anywhere without Tommy in a seatbelt.

The brunette nodded and reached out for him.

Tommy fell back against his chest with a huff, fear rising from the pit of his stomach where he'd barely beaten it back enough to fall asleep last night, hands tightly holding onto the fabric of Wilbur's sweater.

The van rumbled to life below them. It was strange. He hadn't been on their mattress while the van was moving since the night he met Wilbur.

He didn't fall back asleep, but he wasn't fully there either, descending slowly into grief, as though he wasn't held by Wilbur's still breathing body that very moment.

He wasn't sure how long he'd been spaced out, or where they were by the time Wilbur finally managed to draw him back to sentience.

"-ommy? Toms? Can you hear me?"

He blinked as his head was pulled up and he met Wilbur's concerned gaze.

That's stupid. He thought. I should be the one concerned for you.

"Hey." The older boy greeted softly.

"Hi." Tommy hummed in response.

"You alright?"

He didn't answer that time, just pulling his face from Wilbur's hand and pressing his ear to the older boy's chest again.

Bu-dum, bu-dum, bu-dum. Steady. Constant. He couldn't imagine this sound going silent. Wilbur was alive. He was *so* alive.

"C'mon, Tommy," Wil murmured, resting his chin on Tommy's head. "Talk to me."

Wil's encouragements stirred bitter resentment in his chest, turning any words he might have said to ash on his tongue. *I don't want to.* Wilbur had lied. Wilbur was *dying*. It was his worst nightmare and he couldn't seem to wake up.

"Just give him a bit, Wil." Techno said softly from the front.

Tommy's head rose and fell as Wilbur breathed a heavy sigh.

"...Alright." The brunette murmured reluctantly.

Tommy didn't end up falling asleep, nor did he space out again. He wanted to be present.

The van was abnormally quiet for a while until they stopped. Tommy finally pulled himself away from his brother to blink out the windows. A Walmart.

"Bathroom break." Techno explained.

Tommy nodded slowly, eyeing Wilbur as he got up. If he was in any pain, he was good at hiding it. He had a bag slung over his shoulder but instead of asking about it Tommy stubbornly held his tongue. If they would refuse to talk to him he would do the same thing.

They headed inside together, but Tommy turned at some point before they reached the bathrooms and Wilbur was gone. He caught Techno's eye with a frown.

The older boy only shrugged. “I dunno, he said he had things to do. He’s an adult, I’m not going to babysit him.”

Tommy scowled because that was clearly *exactly* why Techno had tracked Wilbur down in the first place, to watch the fucker, but whatever.

After using the bathroom Tommy reached for the faucet, water automatically running over his hands. He met his own eyes in the mirror. Blue rimmed with red, nose blotchy, visible tears crusted on his cheek if you looked closely enough. He stubbornly scrubbed away any evidence of his emotions, wiping away cold water with his sleeve.

Techno was waiting for him when he was finished. He led them across the store, though Tommy wasn’t sure where they were going.

His brother paused, scanning their surroundings. “He must have already picked it up.” The older boy muttered. “Let’s check over here.” Techno turned to walk away.

“Picked up what?” Tommy asked, speaking for the first time since that morning.

Techno flashed him a subtly apologetic look, eyes flicking to a counter behind the teen. Tommy looked back. *Oh.* They were at the pharmacy.

“He’s just been dying this entire time and I never fucking saw it.” The blonde said under his breath with a note of bitterness.

Techno put a hand on his shoulder and steered him away. “People don’t see what they don’t want to see. Our mother died of the exact same thing and it still took over a year of showing her same symptoms for us to start worrying about him. Don’t beat yourself up over it.”

That didn’t make Tommy feel better in the slightest.

Would they talk about Wilbur like this one day? Just as someone that existed once, rather than their brother, their family, their best friend? Would people ask Tommy who Wilbur was, and would he answer: *Oh, he was my brother; he died.* End of story?

Is their family just this road trip? Always meant to end eventually? When the road stopped and there was nowhere else to drive?

“There he is.” Techno’s voice snapped him out of his spiraling thoughts.

Wilbur was approaching them, a large envelope in hand, and a wide grin on his face. “Well? C’mon let’s go!”

He led them back to the van and excitedly shoved the envelope into Tommy’s hands. Tommy looked up at him with a mixed expression of confusion and suspicion.

Wilbur was slightly put off by his hesitance. He nodded to the envelope. “Open it!”

Tommy scowled, but opened the flap and slid the contents into his hand, freezing when he saw what it was.

It was himself. Sitting on the roof of the van, staring up at a black sky. The van was lit up by the flash of the camera and Tommy’s face was a bit overexposed, but you could still see his features.

With trembling hands he slid the picture to the bottom of the stack and looked at the next one, letting out a wet laugh as tears blurred his vision.

A toy gun pointed at Wilbur in the driver’s seat as he drove, his face caught morphing into confusion, mid-sentence.

Tommy grinned as he looked up, but the smile froze when he met Wilbur's eyes.

The brunette grinned back. "Yeah? They come out good? We'll put them in the photo album, I've already got some other stuff in there, tickets, receipts, other things that fit in there just for keepsakes you know..." He kept talking, but Tommy couldn't hear him.

All he could see was Wilbur's face, looking so painfully different from the picture in his lap.

He was dying.

He was actually dying.

This was real.

Tommy was handling things badly, which was about how Techno thought he would.

Granted he hadn't up and taken off halfway across the country in an effort to escape his problems so Techno wasn't really in a position to talk.

They spent the rest of the morning sorting through the pictures, putting them into the photo album and reminiscing on the past few months. There were a decent amount Techno didn't recognize, filled only with Tommy and Wilbur, though there were a couple with neither (*Why did you take a picture of a random cow?! It was cool! We're in a moving vehicle! It's blurry as fuck!*"). You could tell when Techno joined the scene, and he even remembered which photo was his first, a picture of him and Tommy outside of an ice cream place in New Mexico, Techno leaning with an arm resting on Tommy's head and a bored expression on his face. If you looked closely enough you could see Wilbur laughing in the reflection of his sunglasses.

At the time he'd been a little moved that Tommy was so insistent he be in the pictures, and that Wilbur had agreed. He was glad they had though, because now, several months later, it meant the world to him...not that he'd say it out loud.

Tommy had been crying silently the entire time they looked through the photos, and it was taking more effort than Techno would like to admit not to do that same.

"Oh, now *that's* a good one." Wilbur said, holding a picture so he could see it. Techno leaned closer, missing his glasses.

It had all three of them. There were plenty of pictures with all three brothers, but they weren't usually the best quality, being selfies and pictures taken from bad angles. This one however was clear as day. The trio stood shoulder to shoulder, framed by the freezing cold Colorado river in the background. Wilbur and Tommy both had wild grins on their faces, Tommy lifting his inner tube up. Even Techno himself had a begrudging smile, with Wil's arm slung over his shoulders.

He hummed in agreement. "Yeah. We should make copies of that one."

They looked down at the pile before them. There were so many pictures. Techno holding five baked potatoes. Tommy flipping off a cop car. Wilbur and Tommy stuck in a foam pit. All three of them stuck in the same pit a moment later. Techno and Tommy having a water fight at the beach in California. Tommy trying sushi. Wilbur feeding a massive flock of pigeons. The three of them on a carousel. Tommy jumping in a bass pro shop fish tank. Techno carrying Wilbur out of a skating rink after he fell on his ass too many times and bruised his tailbone.

Techno snickered as he picked up the last one. "Hey, remember when you couldn't stand for a week because you broke your ass?"

Wilbur shot him a glare. "When I am dead, you will not be allowed to tell anyone about that."

Tommy laughed at that, surprisingly. “No! Fuck that, I’ll tell everyone I meet, I’ll say, *My brother Wilbur bruised his ass and now he’s dead.*”

“That makes me sound like I died by bruising my tailbone!”

Techno shrugged. “How many people get to say that though? If you’re gonna die anyways-”

“I’M NOT DYING BY SLIPPING AT A SKATING RINK!”

Techno chuckled as Tommy grew quiet.

“Why are you dying?” The blonde asked quietly.

The smiles faded.

Wilbur cleared his throat, eyes dropping to the floor. “...Pancreatic cancer... It’s genetic, they think. My mother had it.”

Tommy twisted the hem of his sweater in his hands, brow furrowing.

“Does...does it hurt?”

There was a painful beat of silence. Wilbur’s eyes were on the floor. “...not with my prescription. I’m okay, I promise.”

Techno thought that was a rather shit promise, especially knowing for a fact that Wilbur hardly ever took the pain medication and was most definitely in pain.

Tommy apparently thought so too.

The teen's face twisted into a scowl and he chucked an empty coke can at Wilbur's head.
"Stop lying! Tell me! Tell me what's actually going on! I don't need to be babied Wil, I've lived through shit before! You aren't doing me any fucking favors!"

Wilbur didn't seem surprised by his outburst, but he refused to meet Tommy's eye, fiddling with the photo in his hand, one taken by Techno of all three of them as Wilbur attempted to teach Tommy how to braid hair.

"I know..." the brunette finally whispered. "I told you, Tommy. Keeping you was selfish. I knew you'd get hurt, and I kept you close anyway-"

Tommy threw something else at him, a croc.

"You're so full of shit! *Oh, I'm so selfish for taking in this orphan, look at me, selfish Wilbur-* Where the fuck would I be without you? Hmm? Sleeping in a culvert in Missouri? I-"
Tommy paused his rambling as his voice broke, taking a shuddering gasp.

"...I... *need* you. I would be nothing without you, you can't just... *die*." The words fell from his mouth like tears fell from his face, dripping across the scattered photos.

Wilbur sighed slowly, exhaling through his nose with a puff.

"...Do you really think I would just... *leave you behind?*"

Tommy went still, looking terribly weary for a sixteen year old.

"You could leave me with the best life I could ask for and it would still be leaving me."

Wilbur looked crushed by that statement. Techno suddenly felt like an outsider, something that hadn't happened since he first started tagging along with the pair last winter.

There was a silent tension inside the van, all the previous laughter and smiles centered on the pictures forgotten.

Wilbur was the first to break the silence.

“Tommy-”

“What am I supposed to do?” Tommy whispered, voice uneven. “How- How do I...” He finally met Wilbur’s eyes as the older boy reached for him.

“How do I live without you?”

Wilbur put an arm around the boy’s shoulders and pulled their foreheads together as the teen’s face crumpled. “The same way you did with me. Loudly-” Techno and Tommy laughed at that. “And happily. And with just a *touch* of crime.”

“Wil...” Techno chided. Wilbur turned to him with an incredulous expression.

“I’m sorry- what do you do for a living again?”

“...fair enough.”

The brunette turned back to Tommy with a scoff as the boy blinked tears from his eyes. “You’re going to be just fine, Tommy. The one thing I don’t regret about my entire life, all twenty-four iffy years, is taking you with me that night. Getting my brothers- *that’s* what made this trip worth it.”

Tommy fell into his arms with a sob.

Techno watched the scene through blurred vision, before pressing his forehead into the back of Wil's shoulder.

They sat like that until they were physically unable to cry any longer.

The trio slowly meandered back down the West coast.

It took several days for Tommy's bitterness to subside beyond surface level. He was still snappish at times, and refused to bring up the conversation of what would happen to him... *after*. Wilbur acted as though nothing had changed, but it was clear to everyone in the van that things were very different.

The road trip was ending.

Tommy stumbled through a few chords of one of Wilbur's songs, cursing when he messed up one of the last notes.

Wilbur leaned over and adjusted the blonde's grip. "There. Try it like that."

"Like that? It feels weird."

"Yeah, well that's how you're supposed to do it."

"Why didn't you say something sooner?!"

Wilbur laughed and Tommy scowled at him but moved his hand to the correct angle.

Techno appeared at the back door, snacks in hand, as well as his phone.

“Dad’s callin’.” He explained shortly, and tapped the phone. “You’re on speaker.”

“Hey boys, how is everyone?” Phil’s voice rang out.

Tommy shot Wilbur a look and the older boy sighed. “It’s fine here, Dad.”

“You’re heading back down to California?”

“Yep.” Techno confirmed, scratching the back of his head.

“You good Tommy?” Phil asked.

Tommy scowled, but it wasn’t exactly an audible answer. “Yeah, fucking poggers.” He muttered.

Wilbur gave the blonde a thin smile. “It’s rough.” He admitted to his father quietly.

Phil’s sigh was loud and crunchy through the phone’s speakers. “...Yeah. It is...Tommy, tell Wilbur to take his medicine.”

Tommy’s eyebrows shot into his hair as Wilbur snatched the phone from Techno. “What the hell?” He hissed.

“Well you won’t listen to me or Techno, and you can’t seem to manage it yourself-”

“That doesn’t give you the right to drag Tommy into it.” Wilbur spat.

“Wil...” Techno said softly.

Wilbur huffed but handed the phone back to him. “I’m an adult. I can make my own decisions. Leave our brother out of it.”

“Brother-?” Phil began before Techno abruptly cut him off.

“We’ll see you soon. Talk to you then. Bye.”

He ended the call.

“That could have been handled better.” The eldest drawled, tossing the phone into the van with a clatter.

Wilbur shot him a glare. “He should know better.”

Techno shrugged, seemingly unbothered by the entire conversation. “You’ve put us in a difficult situation, he’s just desperate.”

“That’s not an excuse.”

“You’re being overprotective. It’s not a big deal.”

There was a pause as Wilbur caught Tommy's eyes, the younger boy staring at him in confusion.

"...Are you not taking your medicine?"

Wilbur gave an exasperated huff. "Now look what you've done." He muttered to Techno.

"Why won't you?" Tommy continued.

Wilbur turned back to him. "I do when I have to. I just avoid it when I can. They're for the--" He cut himself off abruptly.

Tommy raised his eyebrows, eyes dark. "For what?"

Wilbur was silent.

"For the pain?" Tommy guessed. "See, I knew you were lying about it not hurting--"

"Hey--" Techno interrupted him. "Let's not."

Tommy snapped his mouth shut with a huff. He was sick of the arguing, and the tears. But he wasn't about to forget how much he'd been lied to.

"-I'm just sayin', the government sucks. No matter how you see it--"

Tommy interrupted him. “I still don’t know what this has to do with anteaters being a threat to society.”

Wilbur opened one eye to look up at him. “They’re fucking monsters, that’s why.”

Techno blinked at the blonde. “We’re talking about things we don’t like- Wil hates anteaters, I hate the government.”

“Is that why you assassinate people for a living?” Tommy asked.

“Yes.” Techno answered genuinely.

Tommy’s jaw dropped and he looked down at Wilbur who had returned back to his nap. He did that a lot lately.

“Wil, did you hear him?” Tommy whispered as he poked him.

Wilbur’s brow furrowed. “Yes, fuck off.”

“He’s cool.”

“He’s already told me all of this before.”

“He’s cooler than you.”

Wilbur’s eyes opened slowly and he looked up at Tommy with a narrowed gaze. Tommy immediately sensed he was in danger.

He leaned away, looking to Techno to save him but he was already lost. As soon as he moved Wilbur shot up and snatched him, pulling Tommy down to the blankets with a squawk.

“Release!” He ordered immediately. “Release!”

“Drop it Wilbur.” Techno ordered with a smirk, as if he were a dog.

“Calling *Techno* cool?” The brunette seethed. “I *am* your favorite, and you know it, you fucking brat.” Wilbur muttered as he trapped Tommy with a blanket and wrapped his arms around him.

Tommy squirmed for several minutes until he grew tired and went limp.

“I’m getting food, who wants what?” Techno asked.

Wilbur dismissed him with a wave. “I’m fine.”

Techno hesitated but looked to Tommy.

The blonde shrugged as best as he could in the blanket. “Something with fries and Coke.”

Techno nodded and was gone.

“Release.” Tommy ordered once again.

“Who’s your favorite?”

There was a pause as Wilbur waited with a growing smile and Tommy's face turned red.

The blonde muttered something under his breath.

“Sorry, what was that?” Wilbur asked, leaning forward.

Tommy sighed and closed his eyes. “I said, *Wilby is my favorite.*”

Wilbur cackled and unwrapped the blanket.

“Be quiet, you're going to wake him up.”

Tommy registered the words distantly, keeping his eyes closed.

“Do I have to?” Techno's voice was low. “Does he need to knock some sense into you?”

Tommy could almost see Wilbur scowl, even with his eyes shut. “You and Phil- why are you both hellbent on burdening Tommy with this stuff?”

“Because you're burdening us with your inability to take care of yourself. You're not a toddler, Wil. You shouldn't be relying on others to keep yourself from letting you die.”

There was a pause.

“I’m not hungry.”

“You know why that worries me?”

“Yes-”

“-Because Mom did the same thing. It’s not a good sign and I just-” Techno paused. “...I need you to want to be alive as much as I want you to be alive.”

Wilbur sighed and shifted slightly below Tommy.

“Tech...I understand. But I can’t. Physically- I *can’t* keep anything down. And I don’t feel the need to make you two have to deal with that. Besides...”

“Don’t.” Techno warned.

“Starvation isn’t going to kill me first.”

It was painfully silent.

“...He’s awake, by the way.” Techno muttered.

Wilbur jolted beneath him. A hand appeared in his hair. “Tommy?” The brunette asked softly.

Tommy’s brow furrowed. He didn’t open his eyes. “You don’t need to protect me.” He said quietly, even as his voice shook.

Everything shifted as Wilbur pulled him upright and close to his chest. Tommy let him.

The older boy sighed, the sound rasping in his chest against Tommy's ear. "I know. But what sort of brother would I be if I didn't try?"

Phil was waiting for them on the ridge.

The Camarvan pulled up alongside his car, looking out across the sandy outcrop that stretched along the shoreline, dotted with hidden beaches and seabird nests. He greeted them with a grin but the smile faded as soon as he saw the look in Techno's eye as the latter stepped out of the driver's seat, despite his neutral expression.

"No more tour?" He asked softly.

Techno shook his head. "No more tour." He confirmed.

The back door to the van creaked open and Tommy stumbled out, eyes still fixed inside the vehicle. He offered a hand out but Wilbur's arm swatted him away as the brunette pulled himself to the edge of the tailgate.

Techno and Phil joined them at the back, the somber mood palpable.

For what it was worth, Wilbur was completely unbothered. His eyes, though tinged yellow, still had a mischievous glint, like he would pull the rug out from under you at any moment. He stubbornly kept up with his hair routine, though he occasionally relented to let Tommy do it, and his lips were graced with a smirk more often than not.

“Ayup.” He greeted his father.

Phil chuckled. “Have fun?”

Wil’s face lit up. “Oh! We can show you-!” He turned but Tommy had already hopped back into the van and pulled out the photo album. He passed it to Wilbur, who in turn handed it off to Phil.

The older man paused, recognizing the leather bound book.

“Turn to the back.” Wilbur offered.

He did, finding a picture of a disgruntled Technoblade with glasses drawn on his face in black sharpie. Techno groaned as soon as he saw it and sent everyone spiraling into laughter.

“Bruh- it took like a week to get that to come off.”

Tommy snickered. “I would’ve done more if he hadn’t woken up. I was *careful* too, and it still wasn’t enough. Fucking ninja.”

Phil hummed and continued flipping through the pages. “Ha-! I like this one.” He pointed to the picture of a blurred water balloon flying towards Wilbur’s face while he wore a terrified expression.

Tommy laughed loudly. “I remember his scream when that one was taken!”

Wilbur scowled at them. “You would scream too if Techno came at you with a projectile. Fucker never misses.”

“I know. RIP that one seagull.” Tommy nodded wisely.

They stayed like that for a while, Phil looking at all the pictures while the trio argued over who got to tell the story behind them.

Eventually it grew dark and they ate van snack food for dinner. When Phil mentioned the hotel nearby that he was staying at Wilbur only waved his hand and leaned back in the van. “Nah we’ll stay in here.” He patted the side of the vehicle.

Phil’s brow creased a bit. “...You sure? You’d probably be more comfortable inside.”

Wilbur only nodded as Tommy hopped up to sit beside him. “The Camarvan is always best. I prefer it here.”

Phil nodded slowly. “Alright then...I’ll leave you boys for the night then. Get some rest.”

The trio nodded and a chorus of goodbyes were exchanged as Phil turned and got in his car.

They spent the next several days in the area, visiting the beaches, trying local restaurants, and more often than not, just enjoying each other’s company. Wilbur taught Tommy a few more songs on the guitar. Techno showed them both how to throw a knife (only ending in one minor injury). Phil told Tommy stories about the other two from when they were younger, much to their dismay and Tommy’s delight.

But they couldn’t ignore the feeling of dread that was settling over them, try as they might. Wilbur was most desperate to ignore it, to the point of refusing medication after a couple of days.

They didn't push.

Tommy was passed out on a blanket, completely worn from spending the day on the beach. Techno wasn't far behind him, though he wasn't asleep yet, and occasionally opened one eye to shoot his brother and father a good-natured glare if they snickered too loudly.

Phil threw an arm over his son's shoulder, pulling him close to his chest.

"Well..." He said with a sigh. "I won't say I haven't missed you, Wil."

The brunette ducked his head just a bit, shame creeping onto his face.

"I know...I'm sorry Dad."

Phil looked at him with sad eyes. "...No. You're not. But it's okay. It would be selfish of me to keep you from living the best life you could. I wouldn't get in the way of that, no matter how much I might want to."

Wilbur's face crumbled. "I hurt you."

Phil shrugged, eyes sliding back to the water. "Was it worth it?"

Wilbur was looking down at the blonde teenager snoozing on the blanket, brushing the hair from his face when Phil turned back to him.

"Yes." He said quietly, with no doubt in his tone.

His father nodded. “Then it doesn’t matter.”

The conversation lapsed.

“Can I ask something of you?” Wilbur questioned.

Phil sighed. Already knowing the incoming request.

“You want me to take Tommy.”

His son shifted under his arm.

“Techno will if you won’t. He’ll be there for him regardless. But I think it’d be easier...and I think you’d like him.”

A beat passed.

“Of course I’ll do it. But I don’t need a distraction.”

Wilbur laughed softly. “He’s not a distraction. Or a *replacement*, so don’t look at him like he is. That won’t do either of you any good.” Wilbur was smiling.

“But he *is* my brother. If nothing else, I need you to know that.”

Phil pursed his lips.

“I’m not fucking going back to Kansas City.” Tommy muttered, making everyone else look at him suddenly.

Phil raised his eyebrows and Wilbur winced. Techno only snorted. “That’s fine.” The oldest brother added. “Tell ‘em, Phil.”

The man sighed. “...I... sold the house.”

“You *what*?” Wilbur stared at him, mouth agape.

“Yup. Said goodbye. Ripped out the door frame with your heights marked on it.”

Tommy laughed. “I’m going to make fun of how short you were!” He cried, blue eyes shining up at Wilbur.

Wilbur snorted and didn’t mention that he wouldn’t see their new house with him.

The brunette raised his head, taking in their surroundings for maybe the millionth time since arriving, over a week ago.

“I like it here.” He muttered. “I always wanted to live in La Jolla.”

When his skin became tinged with a sickening shade of yellow, just shy of two weeks after meeting up with Phil again, he couldn’t ignore his family’s fear any longer.

Tommy rubbed his hand between his own, brows knit, as if the color would wipe away. Wil sighed and slowly pulled his hand away, even as the blonde made a soft noise of protest.

“Shhh...” He pulled the boy close to him with shaking hands. He wouldn’t be able to see the jaundice buried in his arms. “It’s alright, Toms.”

“It’s not.” Tommy said with a shuddering breath as he pressed his eyes into his brother’s shoulder.

Wilbur rocked them gently, meeting Techno’s eyes on the opposite wall.

And Techno was crying. Silently, but crying nonetheless. And Wilbur knew. It really wasn’t okay.

The life in him was as sure as the flame of a lit match. It sputtered and flickered and in the blink of an eye it would be gone. He could feel the energy that remained buzzing beneath his skin, threatening to disappear at any moment.

But he wasn’t scared. Not anymore. Not for him, anyway.

“Techno,” He breathed, and the man closed his eyes with a grimace, as if he wanted to block out Wilbur’s words, salt still rolling down his face. “You’ll be okay.” And Wilbur didn’t know if it was a promise or a question, but Techno nodded anyway.

“You don’t need me. So just promise that you won’t do something stupid...you won’t *run*-” Techno laughed bitterly.

“No, Wil...I won’t run.” He swore quietly.

Wilbur pressed his face into Tommy’s hair. It smelled like his own hair products.

“You two take care of each other.”

Tommy’s head was shaking.

Blue eyes met brown.

“Stop. Not yet. I’m not ready yet.” He pleaded.

When he pressed his lips to the boy’s forehead, Tommy began to sob.

“I know,” He whispered as the teen shook with sobs. “But I am.”

He’d always loved the beach. The sun was nearly set, golden rays scattered across the empty dunes.

It reminded him of his mother. Of his brothers. Of a bittersweet Christmas, a day so perfectly normal it made him ache with longing, wanting nothing more to return to it. But he couldn’t go back. The time was spent, the hourglass empty. His running had come to an end.

The sound of the waves against the shore was enough to drown out the painful sounding rattle in his chest. Dull hair stirred in the wind, his hands were limp, holding onto their photo album with phantom strength.

He was sat up on pillows against his brother and a sand dune, a woolen blanket spread out beneath them.

Phil stood just behind them, hands loosely in his pockets, feigning ease.

Techno was on his right, supporting his weight as they sat shoulder to shoulder and Tommy was just to his left, sitting with arms wrapped around one propped up knee, staring off towards the water.

The boy rambled about something inconsequential, and Wil watched him fondly. His hair was gold in the setting sun and you would never know he was sitting beside his dying brother, just as cheery and excitable as always.

“-think honestly if I had a superpower I would want to control bees. That would be so fucking cool. Just sic ‘em on somebody. Ya know?”

Wilbur laughed softly, ignoring the stab of pain it sent through him. “Yeah...” He murmured in agreement. “You’re good at saving people.” Hell- he already had. Who knows how long Wilbur would have bothered to stick around if he hadn’t met Tommy.

He might never have forgiven Techno, or seen his father again, or experienced everything he had since he left.

The blonde muttered an agreement under his breath and Wil found himself laughing another laugh, despite the pain of it.

Tommy could always make him laugh.

He could have listened to him talk forever.

The golden circle of sun reached the ocean, slowly dipping down below the waves. Sea birds cawed and a gentle wind stirred the long grasses of the beach. Tommy was still talking.

“-have a problem with the pollen though. Makes me sneeze like nobody’s business. Allergies are *not* fucking poggers, amirite?”

There was a pause.

Tommy looked back at him, smile fading. “Wilbur?”

Techno and Phil had gone still.

Tommy tugged his brother’s hand, leaning closer to him. The illusion of his happiness falling away in a moment, as light faded from the sky, and the blonde called for his brother.

“Wil...?” He repeated softly. “...Wilby?” His voice cracked, lip trembling.

Tommy pressed their foreheads together, face crumpling. Wil’s skin was warm.

But there was no response.

The sun had set.

Wilbur was gone.

It was quiet in the van.

Tommy sat in the passenger's seat, head resting on arms folded on the dashboard, watching the stars through the windshield.

Beside him, the driver's seat was empty.

Tear tracks had dried on his face.

He was back where he started.

Alone in a van.

But it was *so* much worse.

Everything held a memory, an echo. The worn buttons on the center console, the peeling steering wheel, the chipped mug on the floor between the two seats...the lettering taped to the dashboard. The guitar case. The little blue paint marker doodles on the wall beside where he used to sleep. The blankets in the back that *smelled like him*.

Tommy was sobbing again, great retching things that made his throat convulse and lungs sore. He could only manage to take short, shuddering gasps of breaths.

Wilbur was still so painfully present despite being so painfully gone.

Gradually his breathing steadied, and he quieted, only whimpering softly in the light of the street lamps outside.

There was a knock at his window.

He slowly reached over and rolled it down, not bothering to wipe the tears from his face. They would just keep coming anyway.

Technoblade gazed down at him sadly.

“Hey kid.” The older boy greeted softly.

Tommy didn’t trust his voice to work, only nodding to him in response.

Techno sighed, reaching through the window and placing a solid hand on Tommy’s head. The boy crumbled, leaning into the touch with a whine.

“I know,” Techno responded, voice shaking. “It’s okay.” It wasn’t. They both knew. It would never be okay again.

“Come inside.” Techno prodded.

A beat of silence passed, and then the blonde shook his head.

The older boy sighed, leaning down and resting an arm on the door. “You shouldn’t be alone. Especially in this thing.” He tapped the surface of the van with two fingers.

Tommy wet his cracked lips and opened his mouth hesitantly.

“A few more minutes?”

His voice was a wreck, wobbly and broken. Thick with emotion he couldn’t conceal.

There was a pause as the older boy studied him. Then he withdrew his hand, and opened the passenger door with a metallic creak.

“No. Sorry kid. You’d never move if I let you. We’re going inside. Get you some food and sleep. No argument.”

Tommy’s brow furrowed and tears slipped from his eyes, he stumbled through a sentence, taking short, stuttered gasps between every word.

“I- I can’t. S-Sleep.”

If he fell asleep it would be his first time doing so without Wilbur since he’d met the boy, all those months ago.

Techno seemed to understand, and winced, but he gently dragged Tommy off of his seat anyway. The weeping boy collapsed against his chest, shaking in every limb.

“You’re not alone, Tommy.” The older boy whispered to him, holding him tightly as his hyperventilating slowed. “You’re never going to be alone again, I swear.”

It was a promise he had already made to someone once before. A dying wish, if you will.

Maybe Techno could manage to do one good thing.

Tommy was silent in his arms, physically and emotionally exhausted.

Techno pulled him towards their hotel, blond tucked under his arm.

“I gotcha, kid.”

Chapter End Notes

...For what it's worth I am genuinely sorry, but my brain thought this concept up and it was so painful I needed everyone else to experience it too.

Now go drink some water.

The epilogue is short but it sets up the next part of the series.

For all that it's worth now

Chapter Summary

You were worth it in the end.

The epilogue.

Chapter Notes

Did anyone notice the parallel at the end of last chapter between one of Techno's last thoughts and one of Wilbur's first in the fic?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Screeeeech.

Tommy looked over to Techno with wide eyes. The man looked equally terrified.

“Okay... *slower* next time...and maybe don’t slam on the brakes.”

Tommy nodded, adjusting his grip on the steering wheel. “Right...I’ll do that.”

“I mean, it’s a Walmart parking lot, there’s only so much damage even *you* can do.”

The blonde shot him a glare and eased off the brake as gently as he could, yet the vehicle still started forward at an alarming speed.

“Gah! Why is it doing that?!” He cried as he stopped the van once more.

Techno threw a hand up with an exasperated eye roll. “I dunno man, I always thought it was a pain in the ass to drive, I don’t know how the hell Wil managed it.”

Tommy huffed and leaned forward, resting his forehead on the steering wheel with an over dramatic groan.

The older brother sighed, clapping a hand on Tommy’s shoulder. “Look- let’s take a break. Hit up the Dunkin’ over there-”

“You mean *get hit* by the Dunkin’.”

“Oh my god-” Techno muttered as he opened the door with a creak of metal. “ *Wah, wah, wah*, hit a kid with a donut bag *one time* and you’ve scarred him for life.”

“Get me a pink sprinkled one.”

“Yeah, whatever.” Techno said, a small smile pulling at the corner of his mouth as he closed the door and set off across the parking lot.

Tommy watched him go with a sigh. School would be starting in a few weeks. Phil had insisted Tommy go- something about how it was ‘*incredibly irresponsible on the boys’ part to let Tommy miss the entirety of last year*’ ...though he’d been on streets before that anyway so it didn’t seem like an issue to Tommy himself.

Hell, this time last year he was probably sleeping in that half crumbling house he’d been in right up until he found the van unattended.

Less than six months.

That's how long Wilbur was in his life.

He was gone just as suddenly as he showed up, leaving Tommy to reach out for something that wasn't there.

His head hurt.

Tommy rested his chin on the wheel, tracing a scuff mark on the dashboard in front of him. He couldn't remember exactly, but he thought it might have been from when Wilbur was making fun of him for alway putting his feet up, and mocked him, just to get his long-ass foot stuck between the windshield and the plastic.

Tommy snickered quietly at the memory. They ended up having to take his shoe off and then yank it out. He's pretty sure he got a picture of Wil stuck like that. The fucker probably hid it.

Out of habit he reached a hand down to get the photo album from the driver's door, but it wasn't there. They'd moved it to the new house in San Francisco.

Instead his fingers brushed against thick paper, and with a frown he pulled the bundle up, finding a folded map, and a yellow envelope.

He stared at it. There was no address on the envelope but it was sealed, and he could feel something inside. He unfolded the map, eyes narrowing at familiar blue writing across it.

He ripped open the envelope, shaking the contents out. A tape clattered out.

“What the fuck?” He whispered as he held it up. The only identifier on the cassette was a label reading, *My unfinished symphony*.

His eyes darted to the old radio on the console beside him. Hesitantly, he stuck the cassette into the tape player. It took him more than one try to get it in correctly. He turned the volume

up, and fiddled with the play button on the cassette player until it did something.

After a moment of silence, the speakers crackled softly. There was a sniffle, and the sound of someone clearing their throat. As words echoed through the van, Tommy's heart dropped into his stomach.

“Hey, it’s me! Wil! Well- dead Wilbur anyways, dead by now... Ghostbur if you will.”

Wilbur's voice continued rambling words Tommy couldn't hear anymore over the sound of his own breathing, throat growing thick with emotion.

The blonde stammered to himself for a moment before he choked any words out.

“...That motherfucker-”

Chapter End Notes

Wilbur just fucking knew the mess he was leaving behind.

Don't worry, (no, worry) he planned for it.

And that's the fic! The sequel is all about healing.

Edit* the first person to make a 13 reasons why joke in the comments is getting throat punched /srs /lh

End Notes

Sooooo obviously I have a playlist for this fic because music is vital to my creative process.

As always comments are encouraged as are pointing out typos, I promise I feel more embarrassed finding it on my own after a chapter has been up for two weeks than someone saying something about it LMAO.

You can talk with me, tag me, or participate in polls on my Twitter, [grassytastic.](#)

[My Discord Server](#)

Here is the [playlist](#), subject to change.

[We're like brothers art](#)

Works inspired by this one

[i'm somewhere, you're somewhere](#) by Anonymous

[Paper flower's still beautiful thing](#) by [Theialium](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!